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LANDOR'S

IMAGINARY CONVERSATIONS.

IMAGINARY CONVERSATIONS.

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BY

WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR.

Third Series.

DIALOGUES OF LITERARY MEN.

2565.64
Vol. 3.

QUI LEGIT REGIT.

BOSTON:
ROBERTS BROTHERS.
1877.

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DIALOGUES OF LITERARY MEN.

I. LORD BROOKE AND SIR PHILIP SIDNEY.

*Brooke.** I come again unto the woods and unto the wilds of Penshurst, whither my heart and the friend of my heart have long invited me.

Sidney. Welcome, welcome! How delightful it is to see a friend after a length of absence! How delightful to chide him for that length of absence, to which we owe such delight!

Brooke. I know not whether our names will be immortal; I am sure our friendship will. For names sound only upon the surface of the earth, while friendships are the purer and the more ardent the nearer they come to the presence of God, the sun not only of righteousness but of love. Ours never has been chipped or dimmed even here, and never shall be.

Sidney. Let me take up your metaphor. Friendship is a vase which, when it is flawed by heat or violence or accident, may as well be broken at once: it can never be trusted after. The more graceful and ornamental it was, the more clearly do we discern the hopelessness of restoring it to its former state. Coarse stones, if they are fractured, may be cemented again; precious ones, never. And now Greville, seat yourself under this oak; since, if you had hungered or thirsted from your journey, you would have renewed the alacrity of your old servants in the hall.

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* Lord Brooke is less known than the personage with whom he converses, and upon whose friendship he had the virtue and good sense to found his chief distinction. On his monument at Warwick, written by himself, we read that he was servant of Queen Elizabeth, counsellor of King James, and friend of Sir Philip Sidney. His style is stiff, but his sentiments are sound and manly. The same house produced another true patriot, slain in the civil wars by a shot from Lichfield minster. Clarendon, without any ground for his assertion, says there is reason to believe he would have abandoned his party and principles. The family is extant: a member of it was created Earl of Warwick by George II. for services as Lord of the Bedchamber.

Brooke. In truth I did; for no otherwise the good household would have it. The birds met me first, affrightened by the tossing up of caps; and by these harbingers I knew who were coming. When my palfrey eyed them askance for their clamorousness, and shrank somewhat back, they quarrelled with him almost before they saluted me, and asked him many pert questions. What a pleasant spot, Sidney, have you chosen here for meditation! A solitude is the audience-chamber of God. Few days in our year are like this: there is a fresh pleasure in every fresh posture of the limbs, in every turn the eye takes.

Youth! credulous of happiness, throw down
Upon this turf thy wallet, — stored and swoln
With morrow-morns, bird-eggs, and bladders burst, —
That tires thee with its wagging to and fro:
Thou too wouldst breathe more freely for it, Age!
Who lackest heart to laugh at life's deceit.

It sometimes requires a stout push, and sometimes a sudden resistance, in the wisest men, not to become for a moment the most foolish. What have I done? I have fairly challenged you, so much my master.

Sidney. You have warmed me: I must cool a little and watch my opportunity. So now, Greville, return you to your invitations, and I will clear the ground for the company; for Youth, for Age, and whatever comes between, with kindred and dependencies. Verily we need no taunts like those in your verses: here we have few vices, and consequently few repinings. I take especial care that my young laborers and farmers shall never be idle, and I supply them with bows and arrows, with bowls and ninepins, for their Sunday evening,* lest they drink and quarrel. In church they are taught to love God; after church they are practised to love their neighbor: for business on work-days keeps them apart and scattered, and on market-days they are prone to a rivalry bordering on malice, as competitors for custom. Goodness does not more certainly make men happy than happiness makes them good. We must distinguish between felicity and prosperity; for prosperity leads often to ambition, and ambition to disappointment: the course is then over; the wheel turns round but once; while the reaction of goodness and happiness is perpetual.

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* Censurable as this practice may appear, it belonged to the age of Sidney. Amusements were permitted the English on the seventh day, nor were they restricted until the Puritans gained the ascendency. Even labor on certain occasions was not only allowed but enjoined. By an order of Edward VI., the farmer was encouraged to harvest upon the Sunday, and in the same article it is called a great offence to God to be scrupulous and superstitious in foregoing such operations. Aylmer, Bishop of London, used to play at bowls after the service; and, according to Strype, when the good prelate was censured for it, he replied that the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath.

Brooke. You reason justly and you act rightly. Piety, — warm, soft, and passive as the ether round the throne of Grace, — is made callous and inactive by kneeling too much: her vitality faints under rigorous and wearisome observances. A forced match between a man and his religion sours his temper, and leaves a barren bed.

Sidney. Desire of lucre, the worst and most general country vice, arises here from the necessity of looking to small gains; it is, however, but the tartar that encrusts economy.

Brooke. I fear Avarice less from himself than from his associates, who fall upon a man the fiercest in old age. Avarice (allow me to walk three paces further with Allegory) is more unlovely than mischievous, although one may say of him that he at last

Grudges the gamesome river-fish its food,
And shuts his heart against his own life's blood.

Sidney. We find but little of his handiwork among the yeomanry, nor indeed much among those immediately above. The thriving squires are pricked and pinched by their eagerness to rival in expenditure those of somewhat better estate; for, as vanity is selfishness, the vain are usually avaricious, and they who throw away most exact most. Penurious men are oftener just than spendthrifts.

Brooke. Oh that any thing so monstrous should exist in this profusion and prodigality of blessings! The herbs, elastic with health, seem to partake of sensitive and animated life, and to feel under my hand the benediction I would bestow on them. What a hum of satisfaction in God's creatures! How is it, Sidney, the smallest do seem the happiest?

Sidney. Compensation for their weaknesses and their fears; compensation for the shortness of their existence. Their spirits mount upon the sunbeam above the eagle; and they have more enjoyment in their one summer than the elephant in his century.

Brooke. Are not also the little and lowly in our species the most happy?

Sidney. I would not willingly try nor over-curiously examine it. We, Greville, are happy in these parks and forests: we were happy in my close winter-walk of box and laurustine. In our earlier days did we not emboss our bosoms with the daffodils, and shake them almost unto shedding with our transport? Ay, my friend, there is a greater difference, both in the stages of life and in the seasons of the year, than in the conditions of men: yet the healthy pass through the seasons, from the clement to the inclement, not only unreluctantly but rejoicingly, knowing that the worst will soon finish, and the best begin anew; and we are desirous of pushing forward into every stage of life, excepting that alone which ought reasonably to allure us most, as opening to us the *Via Sacra*, along which we move in triumph to our eternal country. We labor to get through the moments of our life, as we would to get through a crowd. Such is our impatience, such our hatred of procrastination, in every thing but the amendment of our practices and the adornment of our nature, one would imagine we were dragging Time along by force, and not he us. We may in some measure frame our minds for the reception of happiness, for more or for less; we should, however, well consider to what port we are steering in search of it, and that even in the richest its quantity is but too exhaustible. It is easier to alter the modes and qualities of it, than to increase its stores. There is a sickliness in the firmest of us, which induceth us to change our side, though reposing ever so softly: yet, wittingly or unwittingly, we turn again soon into our old position. Afterward, when we have fixed, as we imagine, on the object most desirable, we start extravagantly; and, blinded by the rapidity of our course toward the treasure we would seize and dwell with, we find another hand upon the lock — the hand of one standing in shade: — 'tis Death.

Brooke. There is often a sensibility in poets which precipitates 'em thither.

The winged head of Genius snakes surround,
As erewhile poor Medusa's.

We, however, have defences against the shafts of the vulgar, and such as no position could give.

Sidney. God hath granted unto both of us hearts easily contented, hearts fitted for every station, because fitted for every duty. What appears the dullest may contribute most to our genius ; what is most gloomy may soften the seeds and relax the fibres of gayety. We enjoy the solemnity of the spreading oak above us : perhaps we owe to it in part the mood of our minds at this instant ; perhaps an inanimate thing supplies me, while I am speaking, with whatever I possess of animation. Do you imagine that any contest of shepherds can afford them the same pleasure as I receive from the description of it ; or that even in their loves, however innocent and faithful, they are so free from anxiety as I am while I celebrate them? The exertion of intellectual power, of fancy and imagination, keeps from us greatly more than their wretchedness, and affords us greatly more than their enjoyment. We are motes in the midst of generations : we have our sunbeams to circuit and climb. Look at the summits of the trees around us, how they move, and the loftiest the most : nothing is at rest within the compass of our view, except the gray moss on the park-pales. Let it eat away the dead oak, but let it not be compared with the living one.

Poets are in general prone to melancholy ; yet the most plaintive ditty hath imparted a fuller joy, and of longer duration, to its composer, than the conquest of Persia to the Macedonian. A bottle of wine bringeth as much pleasure as the acquisition of a kingdom, and not unlike it in kind : the senses in both cases are confused and perverted.

Brooke. Merciful Heaven ! and for the fruition of an hour's drunkenness, from which they must awaken with heaviness, pain, and terror, men consume a whole crop of their kind at one harvest-home. Shame upon those light ones who carol at the feast of blood ! and worse upon those graver ones who nail upon their escutcheon the name of great ! Ambition is but Avarice on stilts and masked. God sometimes sends a famine, sometimes a pestilence, and sometimes a hero, for the chastisement of mankind: none of them surely for our admiration. Only some cause like unto that which is now scattering the mental fog of the Netherlands, and is preparing them for the fruits of freedom, can justify us in drawing the sword abroad.

Sidney. And only the accomplishment of our purpose can permit us again to sheathe it; for the aggrandizement of our neighbor is nought of detriment to us: on the contrary, if we are honest and industrious, his wealth is ours. We have nothing to dread while our laws are equitable and our impositions light: but children fly from mothers who strip and scourge them.

Brooke.

Across the hearse where homebred Law lies dead
Strides Despotism, and seems a bloated boy,
Who, while some coarse clown drives him, thinks he drives,
Shouting, with blear, bluff face, *Give way, give way!*

We are come to an age when we ought to read and speak plainly what our discretion tells us is fit: we are not to be set in a corner for mockery and derision, with our hands hanging down motionless, and our pockets turned inside-out.

Sidney. Let us congratulate our country on her freedom from debt, and on the economy and disinterestedness of her administrators; men altogether of eminent worth, afraid of nothing but of deviating from the broad and beaten path of illustrious ancestors, and propagating her glory in far-distant countries, not by the loquacity of mountebanks or the audacity of buffoons, nor by covering a tarnished sword-knot with a trim shoulder-knot, but by the mission of right-learned, grave, and eloquent ambassadors. Triumphantly and disdainfully may you point to others.

While the young blossom starts to light,
And heaven looks down serenely bright
  On Nature's graceful form;
While hills and vales and woods are gay,
And village voices all breathe May,
  Who dreads the future storm?

Where princes smile and senates bend,
What mortal e'er foresaw his end,
  Or fear'd the frown of God?

Yet has the tempest swept them off,
And the oppressed with bitter scoff
Their silent marble trod.

To swell their pride, to quench their ire,
Did venerable Laws expire
And sterner forms arise;
Faith in their presence veiled her head,
Patience and Charity were dead,
And Hope beyond the skies.

But away, away with politics: let not this city-stench infect our fresh country-air!

Brooke. To happiness then, and unhappiness too, since we can discourse upon it without emotion. I know not, Philip, how it is, but certainly I have never been more tired with any reading than with dissertations upon happiness, which seems not only to elude inquiry, but to cast unmerciful loads of clay and sand and husks and stubble along the high road of the inquirer. Theologians and moralists, and even sound philosophers, talk mostly in a drawling and dreaming way about it. He who said that virtue alone is happiness would have spoken more truly in saying that virtue alone is misery, if *alone* means *singly;* for, beyond a doubt, the virtuous man meets with more opposites and opponents than any other, meets with more whose interests and views thwart his, and whose animosities are excited against him, not only by the phantom of interest but by envy. Virtue alone cannot rebuff them; nor can the virtuous man, if only virtuous, live under them, — I will not say contentedly and happily, I will say, — at all. Self-esteem, we hear, is the gift of virtue, the golden bough at which the gates of Elysium fly open; but, alas! it is oftener, I am afraid, the portion of the strong-minded, and even of the vain, than of the virtuous. By the constant exertion of our best energies we can keep down many of the thorns along the path of life; yet some will thwart us, whether we carry our book with us or walk without it, whether we cast our eyes on earth or on heaven. He who hath given the best definition of most things hath given but an imperfect one here, informing us that a happy life is one without impediment to virtue.* A happy life is not made up of negatives. Exemption from one thing is not possession of another. Had I been among his hearers, and could have uttered my sentiments in the presence of so mighty a master, I would have told him that the definition is still unfound, like the thing.

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* Aristoteles says in his "Ethics," and repeats it in his "Polity," *εὐδαίμονα βίον εἶναι τὸν κατ' ἀρετὴν ἀνεμπόδιστον.*

A sound mind and sound body, which many think all-sufficient, are but receptacles for it. Happiness, like air and water, the other two great requisites of life, is composite. One kind of it suits one man, another kind another. The elevated mind takes in and breathes out again that which would be uncongenial to the baser; and the baser draws life and enjoyment from that which would be putridity to the loftier. Wise or unwise, who doubts for a moment that contentment is the cause of happiness? Yet the inverse is true: we are contented because we are happy, and not happy because we are contented. Well-regulated minds may be satisfied with a small portion of happiness; none can be happy with a small portion of content. In fact, hardly any thing which we receive for truth is really and entirely so, let it appear as plain as it may, and let its appeal be not only to the understanding but to the senses; for our words do not follow them exactly, and it is by words we receive truth and express it.

I do not wonder that in the cloud of opinions and of passions (for where there are many of the one, there are usually some of the other) the clearer view of this subject should be intercepted: rather is it to be marvelled at, that no plain reasoning creature should in his privacy have argued thus: —

"I am without the things which do not render those who possess them happier than I am; but I have those the absence of which would render me unhappy: and therefore the having of them should, if my heart is a sound one and my reason unperverted, render me content and blest! I have a house and garden of my own; I have competence; I have children. Take away any of these, and I should be sorrowful, I know not how long: give me any of those which are sought for with more avidity, and I doubt whether I should be happier twenty-four hours. He who has very much of his own always has a project in readiness for somewhat of another's: he who has very little has not even the ground on which to lay it. Thus one sharp angle of wickedness and disquietude is broken off from him."

Sidney. Since we have entered into no contest or competition which of us shall sing or sermonize the other fast asleep, and since we rather throw out than collect ideas on the subject of our conversation, do not accuse me of levity — I am certain you will not of irreligion — if I venture to say that comforts and advantages, in this life, appear at first sight to be distributed by some airy, fantastic Beings, such as figure in the stories of the East. These generally choose a humpback slave or inconsiderate girl to protect and countenance: in like manner do we observe the ill-informed mind and unstable character most immediately under the smiles of Fortune and the guidance of Prosperity; who, as the case is with lovers, are ardent and attached in proportion as they alight upon indifference and inconstancy.

Brooke. Yes, Happiness dotes on her works, and is prodigal to her favorite. As one drop of water hath an attraction for another, so do felicities run into felicities. This course is marked by the vulgar with nearly the same expression as I have employed upon it: men say habitually, *A run of luck.* And I wish that misfortunes bore no resemblance to it in their march and tendency; but these also swarm and cluster and hang one from another, until at last some hard day deadens all sense in them, and terminates their existence.

Sidney. It must be acknowledged our unhappiness appears to be more often sought by us, and pursued more steadily, than our happiness. What courtier on the one side, what man of genius on the other, has not complained of unworthiness preferred to worth? Who prefers it? — his friend? no: himself? no, surely. Why, then, grieve at folly or injustice in those who have no concern in him, and in whom he has no concern? We are indignant at the sufferings of those who bear bravely and undeservedly; but a single cry from them breaks the charm that bound them to us.

The English character stands high above complaining. I have, indeed, heard the soldier of our enemy scream at receiving a wound; I never heard ours. Shall the uneducated be worthy of setting an example to the lettered? If we see, as we have seen, young persons of some promise, yet in comparison to us as the colt is to the courser, raised to trust and eminence by a powerful advocate, is it not enough to feel ourselves the stronger men, without exposing our limbs to the passenger, and begging him in proof to handle our muscles? Those who distribute offices are sometimes glad to have the excuse of merit; but never give them for it. Only one subject of sorrow, none of complaint, in respect to court, is just and reasonable; namely, to be rejected or overlooked when our exertions or experience might benefit our country. Forbidden to unite our glory with hers, let us cherish it at home the more fondly for its disappointment, and give her reason to say afterward she could have wished the union. He who complains deserves what he complains of.

Religions, languages, races of men, rise up, flourish, decay; and just in the order I assign to them. O my friend! is it nothing to think that this hand of mine, over which an insect is creeping, and upon which another more loathsome one ere long will pasture, may hold forth to my fellow-men, by resolution of heart in me and perseverance, those things which shall outlive the least perishable in the whole dominion of mortality? Creatures, of whom the best and weightiest part are the feathers in their caps, and of whom the lightest are their words and actions, curl their whiskers and their lips in scorn upon similar meditations.

Let us indulge in them; they are neither weak nor idle, having been suckled by Wisdom and taught to walk by Virtue. We have never thrown away the keepsakes that Nature has given us, nor bartered them for toys easily broken in the public paths of life.

Brooke. Argue, then, no longer about courts and discontents: I would rather hear a few more verses; for a small draught increases the thirst of the thirsty.

Sidney. To write as the ancients have written, without borrowing a thought or expression from them, is the most difficult thing we can achieve in poetry. I attempt no composition which I foresee will occupy more than an hour or two, so that I can hardly claim any rank among the poets; yet having once collected, in my curiosity, all the *Invocations to Sleep*, ancient and modern, I fancied it possible to compose one very differently; which, if you consider the simplicity of the subject and the number of those who have treated it, may appear no easy matter.

Sleep! who contractest the waste realms of Night,
  None like the wretched can extol thy powers:
We think of thee when thou art far away,
We hold thee dearer than the light of day,
  And most when Love forsakes us wish thee ours:
      Oh hither bend thy flight!

Silent and welcome as the blessed shade
  Alcestis to the dark Thessalian hall,
When Hercules and Death and Hell obey'd
  Her husband's desolate despondent call.

What fiend would persecute thee, gentle Sleep,
  Or beckon thee aside from man's distress?
Needless it were to warn thee of the stings
That pierce my pillow, now those waxen wings
  Which bore me to the sun of happiness,
      Have dropp'd into the deep.

Brooke. If I cannot compliment you, as I lately complimented a poet on the same subject, by saying, *May all the gods and goddesses be as propitious to your Invocation*, let me at least congratulate you that every thing here is fiction.

Sidney. There are sensible men who would call me to an account for attempting to keep up with the ancients, and then running down-hill among the moderns; and more especially for expatiating in the regions of Romance. The fastidious and rigid call it bad taste: and I am afraid they have Truth for their prompter. But this, I begin to suspect, is rather from my deficiency of power and judgment, than because the thing in itself is wrong. Chivalry in the beginning was often intemperate and inhumane; afterward the term became synonymous with valorous courtesy: writers, and the public after them, now turn it into ridicule. But there is surely an incentive to noble actions in the deference we bear toward our ladies; and to carry it in my bosom is worth to me all the applauses I could ever receive from my prince. If the beloved keep us from them farther than arm's length for years together, much indeed we regret that our happiness is deferred, but more that theirs is. For pride, and what is better than pride, our pure conscience, tells us that God would bestow on us the glory of creating it; of all terrestrial glory far the greatest.

Brooke. To those whose person and manners, and exalted genius, render them always and everywhere acceptable, it is pleasing to argue in this fashion.

Sidney. Greville! Greville! it is better to suffer than to lose the power of suffering. The perception of beauty, grace, and virtue is not granted to all alike. There are more who are contented in an ignoble union on the flat beaten earth before us, than there are who, equally disregarding both unfavorable and favorable clamors, make for themselves room to stand on an elevated and sharp-pointed summit, and thence to watch the motions and scintillations, and occasional overcloudings, of some bright distant star. Is it nothing to have been taught, apart from the vulgar, those graceful submissions which afford us a legitimate pride when we render them to the worthy? Is there no privilege in electing our own sovereign? no pleasure in bending heart and soul before her? I will never believe that age itself can arrest so vivid an emotion, or that his death-bed is hard or uneasy, who can bring before it even the empty image he has long (though in vain) adored. That life has not been spent idly, which has been mainly spent in conciliating the generous affections by such studies and pursuits as best furnish the mind for their reception. How many, who have abandoned for public life the studies of philosophy and poetry, may be compared to brooks and rivers which in the beginning of their course have assuaged our thirst, and have invited us to tranquillity by their bright resemblance of it, and which afterward partake the nature of that vast body whereinto they run, — its dreariness, its bitterness, its foam, its storms, its everlasting noise and commotion! I have known several such; and when I have innocently smiled at them, their countenances seemed to say, "I wish I could despise you: but alas! I am a runaway slave, and from the best of mistresses to the worst of masters; I serve at a tavern where every hour is dinner-time, and pick a bone upon a silver dish." And what is acquired by the more fortunate among them? They may put on a robe and use a designation which I have no right to: my cook and footman may do the same; one has a white apron, the other has red hose: I should be quite as much laughed at if I assumed them. A sense of inferior ability is painful: this I feel most at home. I could not do nearly so well what my domestics do; what the others do, I could do better. My blushes are not at the superiority I have given myself, but at the comparison I must go through to give it.

Two poets cannot walk or sit together easily while they have any poetry about them: they must turn it out upon the table or the grass or the rock or the roadside. I shall call on you presently; take all I have in the mean while.

Afar behind is gusty March!
Again beneath a wider arch
  The birds, that fear'd grim winter, fly:
O'er every pathway trip along
Light feet, more light with frolic song,
  And eyes glance back, they know not why.

Say, who is that of leaf so rank,
Pushing the violet down the bank
  With hearted spearhead glossy-green?
And why that changeface mural box
Points at the myrtle, whom he mocks,
  Regardless what her cheer hath been?

The fennel waves her tender plume;
Mezereons cloth'd with thick perfume,
  And almonds, urge the lagging leaf:
Ha! and so long then have I stood
And not observ'd thee, modest bud,
  Wherefrom will rise their lawful chief!

Oh never say it, if perchance
Thou crown the cup or join the dance,
  Neither in anger nor in sport;
For Pleasure then would pass me by,
The Graces look ungraciously,
  Love frown, and drive me from his court.

Brooke. Considering the chances and changes of humanity, I wish I were as certain that Pleasure will never pass you by, as I am that the Graces will never look on you ungraciously.

Sidney. So little am I ashamed of the hours I spend in poetry, even a consciousness that the poetry itself is bad never leads me to think the occupation is. Foliage, herbage, pebbles, may put in motion the finer parts of the mind; and although the first things it throws off be verses, and indifferent ones, we are not to despise the cultivator of them, but to consider him as possessing the garden of innocence, at which the great body of mankind looks only through the gate.

In the corner formed by the court-wall, sheltered and sunny, I found, earlier in the season than usual, a little rose-bud; which perhaps owed its existence to my cutting the plant in summer, when it began to intrude on the path, and had wetted the legs of the ladies with the rain it held. None but trifling poetry could be made out of this, yet other than trifling pleasure was.

Brooke. Philip, I can give you only spoiled flowers for unspoiled and unopened ones: will you accept them?

Sidney. Gladly.

Brooke. On what occasion and for whom my verses were composed, you may at once discover. Deem it enough for me to premise in elucidation, that women have no favor nor mercy for the silence their charms impose on us. Little are they aware of the devotion we are offering to them in that state whereinto the true lover is ever prone to fall, and which appears to them inattention, indifference, or moroseness. We must chirp before them eternally, or they will not moisten our beaks in our cages. They like praise best, we thanksgiving.

Sidney. Unfold the paper. What are you smiling at?

Brooke. The names of the speakers. I call one "*Poet*," the other "*Lady*." How questionably the former! how truly the latter! But judge.

Poet. Thus do you sit and break the flow'rs
That might have lived a few short hours,
And lived for you! Love, who o'erpowers
My youth and me,
Shows me the petals idly shed,
Shows me my hopes as early dead,
In vain, in vain admonishèd
By all I see.
Lady. And thus you while the noon away,
Watching me strip my flowers of gay
Apparel, just put on for May,
And soon laid by!
Cannot you teach me one or two
Fine phrases? If you can, pray do,
Since *you* are grown too wise to woo,
To listen I.
Poet. Lady, I come not here to teach,
But learn, the moods of gentle speech;
Alas! too far beyond my reach
Are happier strains.
Many frail leaves shall yet lie pull'd,
Many frail hopes in death-bed lull'd,
Or ere this outcast heart be school'd
By all its pains.

Sidney. Let me hope that here is only

A volant shadow, just enough to break
The sleeping sunbeam of soft idleness.

Brooke. When a woman hath ceased to be quite the same to us, it matters little how different she becomes.

Sidney. Hush! I will hear from you no sentiment but your own, and this can never be yours. Variations there are of temperature in the finest season; and the truest heart has not always the same pulsations. If we had nothing to pardon or to be pardoned, we might appear to be more perfect than we are, but we should in fact be less so. Self-love is ungenerous and unforgiving; love grieves and forgives. Whatever there may be lying hid under those leaves and blossoms shall rest there until our evening walk; we having always chosen the calmest hours of the most beautiful days for our discourses on love and religion. Something of emotion, I cannot doubt, arose in your breast as you were writing these simple lines; yet I am certain it was sweet and solacing. Imagination should always be the confidant, for she is always the calmer, of Passion, where Wisdom and Virtue have an equally free admittance.

Let us now dismiss until evening comes (which is much the best time for them) all these disquisitions, and let us talk about absent friends.

Brooke. We must sit up late, if I am to tell you of all yours.

Sidney. While the weather is so temperate and genial, and while I can be out-of-doors, I care not how late I tarry among

Night airs that make tree-shadows walk, and sheep
Washed white in the cold moonshine on gray cliffs.

Our last excess of this nature was nearer the sea, where, when our conversation paused awhile in the stillness of midnight, we heard the distant waves break heavily. Their sound, you remarked, was such as you could imagine the sound of a giant might be, who, coming back from travel unto some smooth and level and still and solitary place, with all his armor and all his spoils about him, casts himself slumberously down to rest.

II. SOUTHEY AND PORSON.

Porson. I suspect, Mr. Southey, you are angry with me for the freedom with which I have spoken of your poetry and Wordsworth's.

Southey. What could have induced you to imagine it, Mr. Professor? You have indeed bent your eyes upon me, since we have been together, with somewhat of fierceness and defiance: I presume you fancied me to be a commentator. You wrong me, in your belief that any opinion on my poetical works hath molested me; but you afford me more than compensation in supposing me acutely sensible of injustice done to Wordsworth. If we must converse on these topics, we will converse on him. What man ever existed who spent a more inoffensive life, or adorned it with nobler studies?

Porson. None; and they who attack him with virulence are men of as little morality as reflection. I have demonstrated that one of them, he who wrote the *Pursuits of Literature*, could not construe a Greek sentence or scan a verse; and I have fallen on the very *Index* from which he drew out his forlorn hope on the parade. This is incomparably the most impudent fellow I have met with in the course of my reading, which has lain, you know, in a province where impudence is no rarity. I am sorry to say that we critics who write for the learned have sometimes set a bad example to our younger brothers, the critics who write for the public: but if they were considerate and prudent, they would find out that a deficiency in weight and authority might in some measure be compensated by deference and decorum. Not to mention the refuse of the literary world, the sweeping of booksellers' shops, the dust thrown up by them in a corner to blow by pinches on new publications; not to tread upon or disturb this filth, the greatest of our critics now living are only great comparatively. They betray their inconsiderateness when they look disdainfully on the humbler in acquirements and intellect. A little wit, or, as that is not always at hand, a little impudence instead of it, throws its rampant brier over dry lacunes; a drop of oil, sweet or rancid, covers a great quantity of poor broth. Instead of any thing in this way, I would seriously recommend to the employer of our critics, young and old, that he oblige them to pursue a course of study such as this: that under the superintendence of some respectable student from the university, they first read and examine the contents of the book, — a thing greatly more useful in criticism than is generally thought; secondly, that they carefully write them down, number them, and range them under their several heads; thirdly, that they mark every beautiful, every faulty, every ambiguous, every uncommon expression. Which being completed, that they inquire what author, ancient or modern, has treated the same subject; that they compare them, first in smaller, afterward in larger portions, noting every defect in precision and its causes, every excellence and its nature; that they graduate these, fixing *plus* and *minus*, and designating them more accurately and discriminately by means of colors, stronger or paler. For instance, purple might express grandeur and majesty of thought; scarlet, vigor of expression; pink, liveliness; green, elegant and equable composition: these however and others, as might best attract their notice and serve their memory. The same process may be used where authors have not written on the same subject, when those who have are wanting, or have touched it but incidentally. Thus Addison and Fontenelle, not very like, may be compared in the graces of style, in the number and degree of just thoughts and lively fancies; thus the dialogues of Cicero with those of Plato, his ethics with those of Aristoteles, his orations with those of Demosthenes. It matters not if one be found superior to the other in this thing, and inferior in that: the exercise is taken; the qualities of two authors are explored and understood, and their distances laid down, as geographers speak, from accurate survey. The *plus* and *minus* of good and bad and ordinary will have something of a scale to rest upon; and after a time the degrees of the higher parts in intellectual dynamics may be more nearly attained, though never quite exactly.

Southey. Nothing is easier than to mark and number the striking parts of Homer: it is little more difficult to demonstrate why they are so. The same thing may then be done in Milton: these pieces in each poet may afterward be collated and summed up. Every man will be capable or incapable of it in proportion as his mind is poetical; few, indeed, will ever write any thing on the subject worth reading: but they will acquire strength and practice. The critic of the trade will gain a more certain livelihood and a more reputable one than before, and no great matter will be spent upon his education.

Porson. Which, however, must be entered on in an opposite way from the statuary's: the latter begins with dirt and ends with marble; the former begins with marble and ends with dirt. This, nevertheless, he may so manage as neither to be ridiculed nor starved.

Southey. For my own part, I should be well contented with that share of reputation which might come meted out and delivered to me after the analytical and close comparison you propose. Its accomplishment can hardly be expected in an age when every thing must be done quickly. To run with oars and sails was formerly the expression of orators for velocity: it would now express slowness. Our hats, our shoes, our whole habiliments, are made at one stroke: our fortunes the same, and the same our criticisms. Under my fellow-laborers in this vineyard, many vines have bled and few have blossomed. The proprietors seem to keep their stock as agriculturists keep lean sheep, to profit by their hoof and ordure.

Porson. You were speaking this moment of the changes among us. Dwarfs are in fashion still; but they are the dwarfs of literature. These little zanies are invited to the assemblies of the gay world, and admitted to the dinners of the political. Limbs of the law, paralyzed and laid up professionally, enter into association with printers, and take retaining fees from some authors to harangue against others out of any brief before them.

Southey. And they meet with encouragement and success! We stigmatize any lie but a malignant one, and we repel any attack but against fame, virtue, and genius. Fond of trying experiments on poison, we find that the strongest may be extracted from blood; and this itself is rejected as unworthy of our laboratory, unless it be drawn from a generous and a capacious heart.

Porson. No other country hath ever been so abundant in speculation as ours; but it would be incredible, if we did not see it, that ten or fifteen men, of the humblest attainments, gain a comfortable livelihood by periodical attacks on its best writers. Adverse as I have declared myself to the style and manner of Wordsworth, I never thought that all his reviewers put together could compose any thing equal to the worst paragraph in his volumes. I have spoken vehemently against him, and mildly against them; because he could do better, they never could. The same people would treat me with as little reverence as they treat him with, if any thing I write were popular, or would become so. It is by fixing on such works that they are carried with them into the doorway. The porter of Cleopatra would not have admitted the asps if they had not been under the figs. Show me, if you can, Mr. Southey, a temperate, accurate, solid exposition of any English work whatever, in any English review.

Southey. Not having at hand so many numbers as it would be requisite to turn over, I must decline the challenge.

Porson. I have observed the same man extol in private the very book on whose ruin he dined the day before.

Southey. His judgment, then, may be ambiguous, but you must not deny him the merit of gratitude. If you blame the poor and vicious for abusing the solaces of poverty and vice, how much more should you censure those who administer to them the means of such indulgence.

Porson. The publications which excite the most bustle and biting from these fellows are always the best, as the fruit on which the flies gather is the ripest. Periodical critics were never so plentiful as they now are. There is hardly a young author who does not make his first attempt in some review; showing his teeth, hanging by his tail, pleased and pleasing by the volubility of his chatter, and doing his best to get a penny for his exhibitor and a nut for his own pouch, by the facetiousness of the tricks he performs upon our heads and shoulders. From all I can recollect of what I noticed when I turned over such matters, a well-sized and useful volume might be compiled and published annually, containing the incorrect expressions, and omitting the opinions, of our booksellers' boys, the reviewers. Looking the other day by accident at two pages of *judgments*, recommendatory of new publications, I found, face to face, the following words, from not the worst of the species: *Scattering so considerable a degree of interest over the contemplation, &c. . . . The dazzling* *glitter of intellect, &c.* Now, in what manner can we *scatter a degree*, unless it be one of those degrees which are scattered at Edinburgh and Glasgow? Such an expression as *dazzling glitter* may often be applied to fancy, but never to intellect. These gentlemen might do somewhat better if they would read us for the sake of improvement, and not for the sake of showing off a somewhat light familiarity which never can appertain to them. The time however, I am inclined to believe, is not far distant, when the fashionable will be as much ashamed of purchasing such wayside publications as the learned would be of reading them. Come, let us away from these criers of cat's-meat and dog's-meat, who excite so many yelpings and mewings as they pass: the vicinity is none of the sweetest.

You will do me the favor, Mr. Southey, not to mention to those who may be kept under the regimen what I have been proposing here for the benefit of literature; since, although in the street and at college I have had quarrels lighter or graver with most other conditions, I have avoided both conflict and contact with writers for reviews and almanacks. Once indeed, I confess it, I was very near falling as low: words passed between me and the more favored man of letters, who announces to the world the *Works and Days* of Newmarket, — the competitors at its games, their horses, their equisons and colors, and the attendant votaries of that goddess who readily leaves Paphos or Amathus for this annual celebration.

Those who have failed as painters turn picture-cleaners; those who have failed as writers turn reviewers. Orator Henley taught in the last century that the readiest-made shoes are boots cut down: there are those who abundantly teach us now that the readiest-made critics are cut-down poets. Their assurance is, however, by no means diminished from their ill success.

Southey. Puffy fingers have pelted me long enough with snow-balls, and I should not wonder if some of them reached the skirts of my great-coat; but I never turned round to look.

Porson. The little man who followed you in the *Critical Review*, and whose pretensions widen every smile his imbecility excited, would, I am persuaded, if Homer were living, pat him in a fatherly way upon the cheek, and tell him that, by moderating his fire and contracting his prolixity, the public might ere long expect something from him worth reading.

I had visited a friend in *King's Road* when he entered.

"Have you seen the *Review?*" cried he. "Worse than ever! I am resolved to insert a paragraph in the papers, declaring that I had no concern in the last number."

"Is it so very bad?" said I quietly.

"Infamous! Detestable!" exclaimed he.

"Sit down then: nobody will believe you," was my answer.

Since that morning he has discovered that I drink harder than usual, that my faculties are wearing fast away, that once indeed I had some Greek in my head, but — he then claps the forefinger to the side of his nose, turns his eye slowly upward, and looks compassionately and calmly.

Southey. Come, Mr. Porson, grant him his merits: no critic is better contrived to make any work a monthly one, no writer more dexterous in giving a finishing touch.

Porson. Let him take his due and be gone: now to the rest. The plagiary has a greater latitude of choice than we; and if he brings home a parsnip or turnip-top, when he could as easily have pocketed a nectarine or a pine-apple, he must be a blockhead. I never heard the name of the *Pursuer of Literature*, who has little more merit in having stolen than he would have had if he had never stolen at all; and I have forgotten that other man's, who evinced his fitness to be the censor of our age, by a translation of the most naked and impure satires of antiquity, — those of Juvenal, which owe their preservation to the partiality of the Friars. I shall entertain an unfavorable opinion of him if he has translated them well: pray, has he?

Southey. Indeed, I do not know. I read poets for their poetry, and to extract that nutriment of the intellect and of the heart which poetry should contain. I never listen to the swans of the cesspool, and must declare that nothing is heavier to me than rottenness and corruption.

Porson. You are right, sir, perfectly right. A translator of Juvenal would open a public drain to look for a needle, and may miss it. My nose is not easily offended; but I must have something to fill my belly. Come, we will lay aside the scrip of the transpositor and the pouch of the pursuer, in reserve for the days of unleavened bread; and again, if you please, to the lakes and mountains. Now we are both in better humor, I must bring you to a confession that in your friend Wordsworth there is occasionally a little trash.

Southey. A haunch of venison would be trash to a Brahmin, a bottle of Burgundy to the xerif of Mecca.

Porson. I will not be anticipated by you. Trash, I confess, is no proof that nothing good can lie above it and about it. The roughest and least manageable soil surrounds gold and diamonds. Homer and Dante and Shakspeare and Milton have each many hundred lines worth little; lines without force, without feeling, without fancy; in short, without beauty of any kind. But it is the character of modern poetry, as it is of modern arms and equipments, to be more uniformly trim and polished. The ancients in both had more strength and splendor; they had also more inequality and rudeness.

Southey. We are guided by precept, by habit, by taste, by constitution. Hitherto our sentiments on poetry have been delivered down to us from authority; and if it can be demonstrated, as I think it may be, that the authority is inadequate, and that the dictates are often inapplicable and often misinterpreted, you will allow me to remove the cause out of court. Every man can see what is very bad in a poem; almost every one can see what is very good: but you, Mr. Porson, who have turned over all the volumes of all the commentators, will inform me whether I am right or wrong in asserting that no critic hath yet appeared, who hath been able to fix or to discern the exact degrees of excellence above a certain point.

Porson. None.

Southey. The reason is because the eyes of no one have been upon a level with it. Supposing, for the sake of argument, the contest of Hesiod and Homer to have taken place: the judges who decided in favor of the worse, and he indeed in the poetry has little merit, may have been elegant, wise, and conscientious men. Their decision was in favor of that to the species of which they had been the most accustomed. Corinna was preferred to Pindar no fewer than five times, and the best judges in Greece gave her the preference; yet whatever were her powers, and beyond a question they were extraordinary, we may assure ourselves that she stood many degrees below Pindar. Nothing is more absurd than the report that the judges were prepossessed by her beauty. Plutarch tells us that she was much older than her competitor, who consulted her judgment in his earlier odes. Now, granting their first competition to have been when Pindar was twenty years old, and that the others were in the years succeeding, her beauty must have been somewhat on the decline; for in Greece there are few women who retain the graces, none who retain the bloom of youth, beyond the twenty-third year. Her countenance, I doubt not, was expressive: but expression, although it gives beauty to men, makes women pay dearly for its stamp, and pay soon. Nature seems, in protection to their loveliness, to have ordered that they who are our superiors in quickness and sensibility should be little disposed to laborious thought, or to long excursions in the labyrinths of fancy. We may be convinced that the verdict of the judges was biassed by nothing else than their habitudes of thinking; we may be convinced, too, that living in an age when poetry was cultivated highly, and selected from the most acute and the most dispassionate, they were subject to no greater errors of opinion than are the learned messmates of our English colleges.

Porson. You are more liberal in your largesses to the fair Greeks than a friend of mine was, who resided in Athens to acquire the language. He assured me that beauty there was in bud at thirteen, in full blossom at fifteen, losing a leaf or two every day at seventeen, trembling on the thorn at nineteen, and under the tree at twenty.

Returning, Mr. Southey, to the difficulty, or rather to the rarity, of an accurate and just survey of poetical and other literary works, I do not see why we should not borrow an idea from geometricians and astronomers; why we should not have our triangles and quadrants; why, in short, we should not measure out writings by small portions at a time, and compare the brighter parts of two authors page by page. The minor beauties, the complexion and contexture, may be considered at last and more at large. Daring geniuses, ensigns, and undergraduates, members of Anacreontic and Pindaric Clubs, will scoff at me. Painters who can draw nothing correctly hold Raphael in contempt, and appeal to the sublimity of Michel Angelo and the splendor of Titian; ignorant that these great men were great by science first, and employed in painting the means I propose for criticism. Venus and the damned submitted to the same squaring.

Such a method would be useful to critics in general, and even the wisest and most impartial would be much improved by it; although few, either by these means or any, are likely to be correct or quite unanimous on the merits of any two authors whatsoever.

Southey. Those who are learners would be teachers; while those who have learned much would procure them at any price. It is only when we have mounted high, that we are sensible of wanting a hand.

Porson. On the subject of poetry in particular, there are some questions not yet sufficiently discussed: I will propose two. First, admitting that in the tragedies of Sophocles there was (which I believe) twice as much of good poetry as in the Iliad, does it follow that he was as admirable a poet as Homer?

Southey. No, indeed: so much I do attribute to the conception and formation of a novel and vast design, and so wide is the difference I see between the completion of one very great and the perfection of many smaller. Would even these have existed without Homer? I think not.

Porson. My next question is, whether a poet is to be judged from the quantity of his bad poetry, or from the quality of his best?

Southey. I should certainly say from the latter; because it must be in poetry as in sculpture and painting: he who arrives at a high degree of excellence in these arts will have made more models, more sketches and designs, than he who has reached but a lower; and the conservation of them, whether by accident or by choice, can injure and affect in no manner his more perfect and elaborate works. A drop of sealing-wax, falling by chance or negligence, may efface a fine impression; but what is well done in poetry is never to be effaced by what is ill done afterward. Even the bad poetry of a good poet hath something in it which renders it more valuable, to a judge of these matters, than what passes for much better, and what in many essential points is truly so. I will however keep to the argument, not having lost sight of my illustration in alluding to designs and sketches. Many men would leave themselves penniless to purchase an early and rude drawing by Raphael; some arabesque, some nose upon a gryphon or gryphon upon a nose; and never would inquire whether the painter had kept it in his portfolio or had cast it away. The same persons, and others whom we call much wiser, exclaim loudly against any literary sketch unworthy of a leaf among the productions of its author. No ideas are so trivial, so incorrect, so incoherent, but they may have entered the idle fancy, and have taken a higher place than they ought in the warm imagination of the best poets. We find in Dante, as you just now remarked, a prodigious quantity of them; and indeed not a few in Virgil, grave as he is and stately. Infantine and petty there is hardly any thing in the *Iliad*, but the dull and drowsy stop us unexpectedly now and then. The boundaries of mind lie beyond these writers, although their splendor lets us see nothing on the farther side. In so wide and untrodden a creation as that of Shakspeare's, can we wonder or complain that sometimes we are bewildered and entangled in the exuberance of fertility? Dry-brained men upon the Continent, the trifling wits of the theatre, accurate however and expert calculators, tell us that his beauties are balanced by his faults. The poetical opposition, puffing for popularity, cry cheerily against them, *His faults are balanced by his beauties;* when, in reality, all the faults that ever were committed in poetry would be but as air to earth, if we could weigh them against one single thought or image, such as almost every scene exhibits in every drama of this unrivalled genius. Do you hear me with patience?

Porson. With more; although at Cambridge we rather discourse on Bacon, for we know him better. He was immeasurably a less wise man than Shakspeare, and not a wiser writer; for he knew his fellow-man only as he saw him in the street and in the court, which indeed is but a dirtier street and a narrower: Shakspeare, who also knew him there, knew him everywhere else, both as he was and as he might be.

Southey. There is as great a difference between Shakspeare and Bacon as between an American forest and a London timber-yard. In the timber-yard, the materials are sawed and squared and set across: in the forest, we have the natural form of the tree, all its growth, all its branches, all its leaves, all the mosses that grow about it, all the birds and insects that inhabit it; now deep shadows absorbing the whole wilderness; now bright bursting glades, with exuberant grass and flowers and fruitage; now untroubled skies; now terrific thunderstorms; everywhere multiformity, everywhere immensity.

Porson. If after this ramble in the heat you are not thirsty, I would ask another question. What is the reason why, when not only the glory of great kings and statesmen, but even of great philosophers, is much enhanced by two or three good apothegms, that of a great poet is lowered by them, even if he should invest them with good verse? For certainly the dignity of a great poet is thought to be lowered by the writing of epigrams.

Southey. As you said of Wordsworth, the great poet could accomplish better things; the others could not. People in this apparent act of injustice do real justice, without intending or knowing it. All writers have afforded some information, or have excited some sentiment or idea, somewhere. This alone should exempt the humblest of them from revilings, unless it appear that he hath misapplied his powers through insolence or malice. In that case, whatever sentence may be passed upon him, I consider it no honor to be the executioner. What must we think of those who travel far and wide that, before they go to rest, they may burst into the arbor of a recluse, whose weakest thoughts are benevolence, whose worst are purity? On his poetry I shall say nothing, unless you lead me to it, wishing you however to examine it analytically and severely.

Porson. There are folks who, when they read my criticism, say, "I do not think so." It is because they do not think so, that I write. Men entertain some opinions which it is indeed our duty to confirm, but many also which it is expedient to eradicate, and more which it is important to correct. They read less willingly what may improve their understanding and enlarge their capacity, than what corroborates their prejudices and establishes their prepossessions. I never bear malice toward those who try to reduce me to their own dimensions. A narrow mind cannot be enlarged, nor can a capacious one be contracted. Are we angry with a phial for not being a flask? Or do we wonder that the skin of an elephant sits unwieldily on a squirrel?

Southey. Great men will always pay deference to greater: little men will not; because the little are fractious, and the weaker they are, the more obstinate and crooked.

Porson. To proceed on our inquiry. I will not deny that to compositions of a new kind, like Wordsworth's, we come without scales and weights, and without the means of making an assay.

Southey. Mr. Porson, it does not appear to me that any thing more is necessary, in the first instance, than to interrogate our hearts in what manner they have been affected. If the ear is satisfied; if at one moment a tumult is aroused in the breast, and tranquillized at another, with a perfect consciousness of equal power exerted in both cases; if we rise up from the perusal of the work with a strong excitement to thought, to imagination, to sensibility; above all, if we sat down with some propensities toward evil, and walk away with much stronger toward good, in the midst of a world which we never had entered and of which we never had dreamed before, — shall we perversely put on again the *old man* of criticism, and dissemble that we have been conducted by a most beneficent and most potent genius? Nothing proves to me so manifestly in what a pestiferous condition are its lazarettos, as when I observe how little hath been objected against those who have substituted words for things, and how much against those who have reinstated things for words.

Porson. I find, however, much to censure in our modern poets: I mean those who have written since Milton. But praise is due to such as threw aside the French models. Percy was the first; then came the Wartons, and then Cowper, — more diversified in his poetry and more classical than any since.

Southey. I wonder you admire an author so near your own times, indeed contemporary.

Porson. There is reason for wonder. Men in general do so in regard both to liberty and poetry.

Southey. I know not whether the Gauls had this latter gift before they assaulted the temple of Apollo at Delphi; certainly from that time downward the god hath owed them a grudge, and hath been as unrelenting as he was with the dogs and mules before Troy. The succeeding race, nevertheless, has tightened and gilded and gallantly tagged the drum of tragic declamation. Surely not Cowper nor any other is farther from it than Wordsworth.

Porson. But his drum is damp; and his tags are none the better for being of hemp, with the broken stalks in.

Southey. Let Wordsworth prove to the world that there may be animation without blood and broken bones, and tenderness remote from the stews. Some will doubt it; for even things the most evident are often but little perceived and strangely estimated. Swift ridiculed the music of Handel and the generalship of Marlborough; Pope the perspicacity and the scholarship of Bentley; Gray the abilities of Shaftesbury and the eloquence of Rousseau. Shakspeare hardly found those who would collect his tragedies; Milton was read from godliness; Virgil was antiquated and rustic; Cicero, Asiatic. What a rabble has persecuted my friend! An elephant is born to be consumed by ants in the midst of his unapproachable solitudes: Wordsworth is the prey of Jeffrey. Why repine? Let us rather amuse ourselves with allegories, and recollect that God in the creation left his noblest creature at the mercy of a serpent.

Porson. In our authors of the present day I would recommend principally to reduce the expenditure of words to the means of support, and to be severe in style without the appearance of severity. But this advice is more easily given than taken. Your friend is verbose; not indeed without something for his words to rest upon, but from a resolution to gratify and indulge his capacity. He pursues his thoughts too far; and considers more how he may show them entirely than how he may show them advantageously. Good men may utter whatever comes uppermost: good poets may not. It is better, but it is also more difficult, to make a selection of thoughts than to accumulate them. He who has a splendid sideboard should have an iron chest with a double lock upon it, and should hold in reserve a greater part than he displays.

I know not why two poets so utterly dissimilar as your author and Coleridge should be constantly mentioned together. In the one I find diffuseness, monotony, not indistinctness, but uninteresting expanse, and such figures and such coloring as Morland's; in the other, bright colors without form, sublimely void. In his prose he talks like a madman, when he calls Saint Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians "the sublimest composition of man."

Southey. This indeed he hath spoken, but he has not yet published it in his writings: it will appear in his *Table Talk*, perhaps.

Porson. Such table-talk may be expected to come forth very late in the evening, when the wine and candles are out, and the body lies horizontally underneath. He believes he is a believer; but why does he believe that the Scriptures are best reverenced by bearing false witness to them? Is it an act of piety to play the little child in the *go-cart* of Religion, or to beslaver the pretty dress he has just put on?

> Porrigens teneras manus
> Matris e gremio suæ
> Semihiante labello.

Pardon a quotation: I hate it! I wonder how it escaped me.

Wordsworth goes out of his way to be attacked; he picks up a piece of dirt, throws it on the carpet in the midst of the company, and cries, *This is a better man than any of you!* He does indeed mould the base material into what form he chooses; but why not rather invite us to contemplate it than challenge us to condemn it? Here surely is false taste.

Southey. The principal and the most general accusation against him is, that the vehicle of his thoughts is unequal to them. Now did ever the judges at the Olympic games say, "We would have awarded to you the meed of victory, if your chariot had been equal to your horses: it is true they have won; but the people are displeased at a car neither new nor richly gilt, and without a gryphon or sphinx engraved on the axle"? You admire simplicity in Euripides; you censure it in Wordsworth: believe me, sir, it arises in neither from penury of thought — which seldom has produced it — but from the strength of temperance, and at the suggestion of principle. Some of his critics are sincere in their censure, and are neither invidious nor unlearned; but their optics have been exercised on other objects altogether dissimilar, and they are (permit me an expression not the worse for daily use) entirely out of their element. His very clearness puzzles and perplexes them, and they imagine that straightness is distortion, — as children on seeing a wand dipped in limpid and still water. Clear writers, like clear fountains, do not seem so deep as they are: the turbid look the most profound.

Porson. Fleas know not whether they are upon the body of a giant or upon one of ordinary size, and bite both indiscriminately.

Southey. Our critics are onion-eaters by the Pyramids of Poetry. They sprawl along the sands, without an idea how high and wonderful are the edifices above, whose bases are solid as the earth itself, and whose summits are visible over a hundred ages.

Ignorance has not been single-handed the enemy of Wordsworth; but Petulance and Malignity have accompanied her, and have been unremittent in their attacks. Small poets, small critics, lawyers who have much time on their hands and hanging heavily, come forward unfeed against him; such is the spirit of patriotism, rushing everywhere for the public good. Most of these have tried their fortune at some little lottery-office of literature, and, receiving a blank, have chewed upon it harshly and wryly. We, like jackdaws, are amicable creatures while we are together in the dust; but let any gain a battlement or steeple, and behold! the rest fly about him at once, and beat him down.

Take up a poem of Wordsworth's and read it, — I would rather say, read them all; and, knowing that a mind like yours must grasp closely what comes within it, I will then appeal to you whether any poet of our country, since Milton, hath exerted greater powers with less of strain and less of ostentation. I would however, by his permission, lay before you for this purpose a poem which is yet unpublished and incomplete.

Porson. Pity, with such abilities, he does not imitate the ancients somewhat more.

Southey. Whom did they imitate? If his genius is equal to theirs he has no need of a guide. He also will be an ancient; and the very counterparts of those who now decry him will extol him a thousand years hence in malignity to the moderns. The ancients have always been opposed to them; just as, at routs and dances, elderly beauties to younger. It would be wise to contract the scene of action, and to decide the business in both cases by couples.

Why do you repeat the word *rout* so often?

Porson. Not because the expression is novel and barbarous, I do assure you; nor because the thing itself is equally the bane of domestic, of convivial, and of polite society. I was once at one by mistake, and really I saw there what you describe; and this made me (as you tell me I did, though I was not aware of it) repeat the word, and smile. You seem curious.

Southey. Rather, indeed.

Porson. I had been dining out: there were some who smoked after dinner; within a few hours the fumes of their pipes produced such an effect on my head, that I was willing to go into the air a little. Still I continued hot and thirsty; and an undergraduate, whose tutor was my old acquaintance, proposed that we should turn into an oyster-cellar, and refresh ourselves with oysters and porter. The rogue, instead of this, conducted me to a fashionable house in the neighborhood of Saint James's; and although I expostulated with him, and insisted that we were going upstairs and not down, he appeared to me so ingenuous and so sincere in his protestations to the contrary, that I could well disbelieve him no longer. Nevertheless, receiving on the stairs many shoves and elbowings, I could not help telling him plainly that, if indeed it was the oyster-cellar in Fleet Street, the company was much altered for the worse, and that in future I should frequent another. When the fumes of the pipes had left me, I discovered the deceit by the brilliancy and indecency of the dresses, and was resolved not to fall into temptation. Although, to my great satisfaction and surprise, no immodest proposal was directly made to me, I looked about, anxious that no other man in company should know me beside those whose wantonness had conducted me thither; and I would have escaped if I could have found the door, from which every effort I made appeared to remove me farther and farther.

A pretty woman said loudly, "He has no gloves on!"

"What nails the creature has!" replied an elder one. "Pianoforte keys wanting the white!" I tried to conceal my hands as well as might be; when suddenly there was a titter from the middle-aged and young, and a grave look and much erectness from the rest. So serious and stern did they appear to me, I never saw the like but once; which was in a file of soldiers, ordered out to shoot a deserter at St. Ives. I was the only person, young or old, male or female, that blushed; and I had not done so before for thirty years, to the best of my recollection. I now understood that blushing is a sign of half-breeding; and that an elevation of the eyebrow, and the opening of the lips a straw's breadth, are the most violent expressions of feeling permitted in such places. The gentlemen were neutral; unless the neutrality may be said to have been broken by two or three words, which I suspect to have been meant for English; a *token-coinage* fit only for the district. One, however, more polite and more attentive, bowed to me. I did not recollect his features, which he divined by mine, and said, "Sir, I once recovered your watch for you, and wish I could now as easily recover its neighbor, the button." I looked down, and perceived that the place of concealment, the refuge of my hand, had, like my conductor, been false to me. The gentleman was a thief-taker; three others of the fraternity had likewise been invited on suspicion that there were several pickpockets: I mean beside the legitimate, and supernumerary to those who had been seated by the lady of the house at the card-tables. The thief-takers were recognized by the company; the higher and more respectable spoke familiarly with them; persons of inferior rank saluted them more distantly and coldly; and there were some few who slunk obliquely from them as they passed, like landsmen walking on deck in a breeze. This shyness was far from mutual; and the gentlemen who presided here as the good genii or tutelary deities of the place awakened with winks one another's smiles, and pardoned the inattention.

Southey. Those are fortunate who lose nothing in such places, and more fortunate who acquire nothing. You yourself remain quite unchanged: not a tone of your voice, not an article of your dress —

Porson. If this appears strange to you, it will appear stranger that I was an object of imitation. What the thief-taker saw with apprehension, the young gentlemen have copied with sedulity, though they carry gloves. Their hands take that turn.

I little thought that any of the company could have known me, or that my treacherous friend would have mentioned my name; and still less should I have prognosticated that I must, in an unguarded moment, set a fashion to the dandies, such as the dress of the ancients and the decency of the moderns had hitherto precluded.

I now come to your remark, confirmed to me by my own observation, upon the hostilities at such parties. A beldame with prominent eyes, painted mole-hairs, and abundantly rich in the extensive bleaching-ground of cheeks and shoulders — a German as I imagine — was speaking all manner of spiteful things against a young person called pretty; and after a long discussion, not only on her defects, but also on those of her family and parchments, *Who is she*, *I should like to know*, terminated the effusion. My betrayer had absconded, not without engaging another to find me and conduct me home. As we were passing through the folding-doors, I saw the baroness (for such he called her) with her arm upon the neck of the girl, and looking softly and benignly, and styling her *my young friend here* in such a sweet guttural accent, so long in drawing up, you would have thought it must have come from the heart at the very least. I mentioned my surprise.

"She was so strongly the fashion at the close of the evening," said my Mentor, "that it would never do (for the remainder of the night) not to know her; and, as proper time was wanting to get up a decent enmity, nothing was left for it but sworn friendship. To-morrow the baroness will call her my *protégée*, and the day after ask again, *Who is she*, unless she happens to hear that the girl has a person of high rank among her connections, which I understand she has; then the baroness will press her to the heart, or to that pound of flesh which lies next it."

Trifling people are often useful, unintentionally and unconsciously: illustrations may be made out of them even for scholars and sages. A hangman sells to a ragman the materials on which a Homer is printed. Would you imagine that in places like these it was likely for me to gain a new insight into language?

Southey. I should not, indeed. Children make us reflect on it occasionally, by an unusual and just expression; but in such society every thing is trite and trivial.

Porson. Yet so it was. A friend who happened to be there, although I did not see him, asked me afterward what I thought of the naked necks of the ladies.

"To tell you the truth," replied I, "the women of all countries, and the men in most, have usually kept their necks naked."

"You appear not to understand me, or you quibble," said he; "I mean their bosoms."

I then understood for the first time that *neck* signifies *bosom* when we speak of women, though not so when we speak of men or other creatures. But if *bosom* is *neck*, what according to the same scale of progression ought to be *bosom?* The usurped dominion of neck extends from the ear downward to where mermaids become fish. This conversation led me to reflect that I was born in the time when people had *thighs:* before your memory, I imagine. At present there is nothing but leg from the hip to the instep. My friend, Mr. Small, of Peter-house, a very decent and regular man, and fond of fugitive pieces, read before a lady and her family, from under the head of *descriptive*, some verses about the spring and the bees. Unluckily, the *honeyed thighs* of our little European sugar-slaves caught the attention of the mother, who colored excessively at the words, and said with much gravity of reproof, "Indeed, Mr. Small, I never could have thought it of you," and added, waving her hand with matronly dignity toward the remainder of the audience, "Sir, I have daughters." And I know not what offence the Great Toe can have committed, that he never should be mentioned by the graver and more stately members of the family, or, if mentioned, be denounced with all his adherents; when many of these graver and statelier walk less humbly, and with much less heed against offending. In Italy, if any extremity of the human body is mentioned, it is preceded by the words, "*with respect;*" so that most respect is shown to the parts, as to the characters, that least deserve it.

Southey. Pray tell me what else appeared to you remarkable at the rout; for when a person of your age and with your powers of observation is present at one for the first time, many things must strike him which another sees without reflection.

Porson. I saw among the rest two or three strangers of distinction, as I understood by their dresses and decorations; and, observing that nobody noticed them, except the lady of the house, who smiled and dropped a few syllables as she passed, I inquired the next day whether they were discreditable or suspicious. "On the contrary," said my informant, "they are of the highest character as well as of the highest rank, and, above all, of well-proved loyalty: but we Englishmen lose our facility of conversation in the presence of strangers; added to which, we consider it an indecorous thing to pay the least attention to persons to whom we never were introduced. Strangers act otherwise. Every man of education, and of a certain rank, does the honors, not of the house, but of society at large. In no company at Paris, or any other capital in the world, would a foreigner stand five minutes without receiving some attention and courtesy. Abroad all gentlemen are equal, from the *duc et pair* to the Gascon who dines on chestnuts; and all feel that they are. The Englishman of ancient but private name is indignant and sullen that his rights at home are denied him; and his wounded pride renders him unsocial and uncivil. Pride of another kind acts on our society in the same manner. I have seen Irish peers, issuing from the shop and the desk, push rudely and scornfully by the most ancient of the French nobility; the cadets of whose families founded the oldest of ours, and waved the sword of knighthood over our Plantagenets. For which reason, whenever I sit down at table in any public place with an Irish or even an English peer of recent creation, I select the sturdiest of my servants to stand behind my chair, with orders to conduct him by the ears out of the room, should I lift up a finger to indicate the command."

I ought not to have interrupted you so long, in your attempt to prove Wordsworth, shall I say, the rival or the resembler of the ancients?

Southey. Such excursions are not unseasonable in such discussions, and lay in a store of good humor for them. Your narrative has amused me exceedingly. As you call upon me to return with you to the point we set out from, I hope I may assert without a charge of paradox, that whatever is good in poetry is common to all good poets, however wide may be the diversity of manner. Nothing can be more dissimilar than the three Greek tragedians: but would you prefer the closest and best copier of Homer to the worst (whichever he be) among them? Let us avoid what is indifferent or doubtful, and embrace what is good, whether we see it in another or not; and if we have contracted any peculiarity while our muscles and bones were softer, let us hope finally to outgrow it. Our feelings and modes of thinking forbid and exclude a very frequent imitation of the old classics, not to mention our manners, which have a nearer connection than is generally known to exist with the higher poetry. When the occasion permitted it, Wordsworth has not declined to treat a subject as an ancient poet of equal vigor would have treated it. Let me repeat to you his *Laodamia*.

Porson. After your animated recital of this classic poem, I begin to think more highly of you both. It is pleasant to find two poets living as brothers, and particularly when the palm lies between them, with hardly a third in sight. Those who have ascended to the summit of the mountain sit quietly and familiarly side by side; it is only those who are climbing with briers about their legs, that kick and scramble. Yours is a temper found less frequently in our country than in others. The French poets, indeed, must stick together to keep themselves warm. By employing courteous expressions mutually, they indulge their vanity rather than their benevolence, and bring the spirit of contest into action gayly and safely. Among the Romans we find Virgil, Horace, and several of their contemporaries intimately united and profuse of reciprocal praise. Ovid, Cicero, and Pliny are authors the least addicted to censure, and the most ready to offer their testimony in favor of abilities in Greek or countryman. These are the three Romans — the least amiable of nations, and (one excepted) the least sincere — with whom I should have liked best to spend an evening.

Southey. Ennius and old Cato, I am afraid, would have run away with your first affections.

Porson. Old Cato! He, like a wafer, must have been well wetted to be good for any thing. Such gentlemen as old Cato we meet every day in St. Mary Axe, and wholesomer wine than his wherever there are sloes and turnips. Ennius could converse without ignorance about Scipio, and without jealousy about Homer.

Southey. And I think he would not have disdained to nod his head on reading *Laodamia*.

Porson. You have recited a most spirited thing, indeed;

and now to give you a proof that I have been attentive, I will remark two passages that offend me. In the first stanza,

With sacrifice before the rising morn
Performed, my slaughtered lord *have I required;*
And in thick darkness, amid shades forlorn,
Him of the infernal Gods *have I desired,* —

I do not see the necessity of *Performed*, which is dull and cumbersome. The second line and the fourth terminate too much alike, and express to a tittle the same meaning: *have I required* and *have I desired* are worse than prosaic; beside which there are four words together of equal length in each.

Southey. I have seen a couplet oftener than once in which every word of the second verse corresponds in measure to every one above it.

Porson. The Scotch have a scabby and a frost-bitten ear for harmony, both in verse and prose; and I remember in *Douglas* two such as you describe: —

This is the place — the centre of the grove,
Here stands the oak — the monarch of the wood.

After this whiff of vapor I must refresh myself with a draught of pure poetry, at the bottom of which is the flake of tartar I wish away: —

He spake of love, such love as spirits feel
In worlds whose course is equable and pure;
No fears to beat away, no strife to heal,
The past unsighed for, and the future sure;
Spake, as a witness, of a second birth,
For all that is most perfect upon earth.

How unseasonable is the allusion to *witness* and *second birth!* — which things, however holy and venerable in themselves, come stinking and reeking to us from the conventicle. I desire to find Laodamia in the silent and gloomy mansion of her beloved Protesilaus; not elbowed by the godly butchers in Tottenham-court Road, nor smelling devoutly of ratafia among the sugar-bakers' wives at Blackfriars.

Mythologies should be kept distinct: the fire-place of one should never be subject to the smoke of another. The gods of different countries, when they come together unexpectedly, are jealous gods; and, as our old women say, *turn the house out of windows.*

Southey. A current of rich and bright thoughts runs through the poem. Pindar himself would not on that subject have braced one to more vigor, nor Euripides have breathed into it more tenderness and passion. The first part of the stanza you have just now quoted might have been heard with shouts of rapture in the regions it describes.

Porson. I am not insensible to the warmly chaste morality which is the soul of it, nor indifferent to the benefits that literature on many occasions has derived from Christianity. But poetry is a luxury to which, if she tolerates and permits it, she accepts no invitation: she beats down your gates and citadels, levels your high places, and eradicates your groves. For which reason I dwell more willingly with those authors who cannot mix and confound the manners they represent. The hope that we may rescue at Herculaneum a great number of them hath, I firmly believe, kept me alive. Reasonably may the best be imagined to exist in a library of some thousands. It will be recorded to the infamy of the kings and princes now reigning, or rather of those whose feet put into motion their rocking-horses, that they never have made a common cause in behalf of learning; but, on the contrary, have made a common cause against it. The Earth opened her bosom before them, conjuring them to receive again, while it was possible, the glories of their species; and they turned their backs. They pretended that it is not their business or their duty to interfere in the internal affairs of other nations. This is not an internal affair of any; it interests all; it belongs to all: and these scrupulous men have no scruple to interfere in giving their countenance and assistance when a province is to be invaded or a people to be enslaved.

Southey. To neglect what is recoverable in the authors of antiquity is like rowing away from a crew that is making its escape from shipwreck.

Porson. The most contemptible of the Medicean family did more for the advancement of letters than the whole body of existing potentates. If their delicacy is shocked or alarmed at the idea of a proposal to send scientific and learned men to Naples, let them send a brace of pointers as internuncios, and the property is their own. Twenty scholars in seven years might retrieve the worst losses we experience from the bigotry of popes and caliphs. I do not intend to assert that every Herculanean manuscript might within that period be unfolded; but the three first legible sentences might be, which is quite sufficient to inform the intelligent reader whether a farther attempt on the scroll would repay his trouble. There are fewer than thirty Greek authors worth inquiring for: they exist beyond doubt; and beyond doubt they may, by attention, patience, and skill, be brought to light.

Southey. You and I, Mr. Porson, are truly and sincerely concerned in the loss of such treasures; but how often have we heard much louder lamentations than ours, from gentlemen who, if they were brought again to light, would never cast their eyes over them, even in the bookseller's window! I have been present at homilies on the corruption and incredulity of the age, and principally on the violation of the Sabbath, from sleek clergymen, canons of cathedrals, who were at the gaming-table the two first hours of that very day; and I have listened to others on the loss of the classics, from men who never took the trouble to turn over half that is remaining to us of Cicero and Livius.

Porson. The Greek language is almost unknown out of England and northern Germany: in the rest of the world, exclusive of Greece, I doubt whether fifty scholars ever read one page of it without a version.

Southey. Give fifteen to Italy, twelve to the Netherlands, as many to France: the remainder will hardly be collected in Sweden, Denmark, Russia, Austria. In regard to Spain and Portugal, we might as well look for them among the Moors and Negroes.

Porson. You are too prodigal to Italy and France. Matthiæ, in his preface to the Greek grammar, speaks of Germany, of England, of Holland; not a word of France, — the country of Stephanus, Budæus, and the Scaligers. Latterly we have seen only Villoison and Larcher fairly escape from the barbarous ignorance around them. Catholic nations in general seem as averse to the Greek language as to the Greek ritual.

Southey. The knowledge of books written in our own is extending daily.

Porson. Although the knowledge too of Greek is extending in England, I doubt whether it is to be found in such large masses as formerly. Schools and universities, like rills and torrents, roll down some grains of it every season; but the lumps have been long stored up in cabinets. I delight in the diffusion of learning; yet, I must confess it, I am most gratified and transported at finding a large quantity of it in one place: just as I would rather have a solid pat of butter at breakfast than a splash of grease upon the table-cloth, that covers half of it. Do not attempt to defend the idle and inconsiderate knaves who manage our affairs for us; or defend them on some other ground. Prove, if you please, that they have, one after another, been incessantly occupied in rendering us more moral, more prosperous, more free; but abstain, sir, from any allusion to their solicitude on the improvement of our literary condition. With a smaller sum than is annually expended on the appointment of some silly and impertinent young envoy, we might restore all or nearly all those writers of immortal name, whose disappearance has been the regret of Genius for four entire centuries. In my opinion, a few thousand pounds laid out on such an undertaking would be laid out as creditably as on a Persian carpet or a Turkish tent; as creditably as on a collar of rubies and a ball-dress of Brussels lace for our Lady in the manger, or as on gilding for the adoration of princesses and their capuchins, the posteriors and anteriors of Saint Januarius.

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SECOND CONVERSATION.

Porson. Many thanks, Mr. Southey, for this visit in my confinement. I do believe you see me on my last legs; and perhaps you expected it.

Southey. Indeed, Mr. Professor, I expected to find you unwell, according to report; but as your legs have occasionally failed you, both in Cambridge and in London, the same event may happen again many times before the last. The cheerfulness of your countenance encourages me to make this remark.

Porson. There is that soft and quiet and genial humor about you, which raises my spirits and tranquillizes my infirmity. Why (I wonder) have we not always been friends?

Southey. Alas, my good Mr. Professor, how often have the worthiest men asked the same question, — not indeed of each other, but of their own hearts, — when age and sickness have worn down their asperities, when rivalships have grown languid, animosities tame, inert, and inexcitable, and when they have become aware of approaching more nearly the supreme perennial fountain of benevolence and truth!

Porson. Am I listening to the language and to the sentiments of a poet? I ask the question with this distinction; for I have often found a wide difference between the sentiments and the language. Generally nothing can be purer or more humane than what is exhibited in modern poetry; but I may mention to you, who are known to be exempt from the vice, that the nearest neighbors in the most romantic scenery, — where every thing seems peace, repose, and harmony, — are captious and carping one at another. When I hear the song of the nightingale, I neglect the naturalist; and in vain does he remind me that its aliment is composed of grubs and worms. Let poets be crop-full of jealousy; let them only sing well: that is enough for me.

Southey. I think you are wrong in your supposition, that the poet and the man are usually dissimilar.

Porson. There is a race of poets, — not however the race of Homer and Dante, Milton and Shakspeare, — but a race of poets there is, which Nature has condemned to a Siamese twinship. Wherever the poet is, there also must the man obtrude obliquely his ill-favored visage. From a drunken connection with Vanity this surplus offspring may always be expected. In no two poets that ever lived do we find the fact so remarkably exemplified as in Byron and Wordsworth. But higher power produces an intimate consciousness of itself; and this consciousness is the parent of tranquillity and repose. Small poets (observe, I do not call Wordsworth and Byron small poets) are as unquiet as grubs, which in their boneless and bloodless flaccidity struggle and wriggle and die the moment they tumble out of the nutshell and its comfortable drouth. Shakspeare was assailed on every side by rude and beggarly rivals, but he never kicked them out of his way.

Southey. Milton was less tolerant; he shrivelled up the lips of his revilers by the austerity of his scorn. In our last conversation, I remember, I had to defend against you the weaker of the two poets you just now cited, before we came to Milton and Shakspeare. I am always ready to undertake the task. Byron wants no support or setting off, so many workmen have been employed in the construction of his throne, and so many fair hands in the adaptation of his cushion and canopy. But Wordsworth, in his poetry at least, always aimed at —

Porson. My dear Mr. Southey, there are two quarters in which you cannot expect the will to be taken for the deed: I mean the women and the critics. Your friend inserts parenthesis in parenthesis, and adds clause to clause, codicil to codicil, with all the circumspection, circuition, wariness, and strictness of an indenture. His client has it hard and fast. But what is an axiom in law is none in poetry. You cannot say in your profession, *plus non vitiat; plus* is the worst vitiator and violator of the Muses and the Graces.

Be sparing of your animadversions on Byron. He will always have more partisans and admirers than any other in your confraternity. He will always be an especial favorite with the ladies, and with all who, like them, have no opportunity of comparing him with the models of antiquity. He possesses the soul of poetry, which is energy; but he wants that ideal beauty which is the sublimer emanation, I will not say of the real, for this is the more real of the two, but of that which is ordinarily subject to the senses. With much that is admirable, he has nearly all that is vicious; a large grasp of small things, without selection and without cohesion. This likewise is the case with the other, without the long hand and the strong fist.

Southey. I have heard that you prefer Crabbe to either.

Porson. Crabbe wrote with a twopenny nail, and scratched rough truths and rogues' facts on mud walls. There is however much in his poetry, and more in his moral character, to admire. Comparing the smartnesses of Crabbe with Young's, I cannot help thinking that the reverend doctor must have wandered in his Night Thoughts rather too near the future vicar's future mother, so striking is the resemblance. But the vicar, if he was fonder of low company, has greatly more nature and sympathy, greatly more vigor and compression. Young moralized at a distance on some external appearances of the human heart; Crabbe entered it *on all fours*, and told the people what an ugly thing it is inside.

Southey. This simple-minded man is totally free from malice and animosity.

Porson. Rightly in the use of these two powers have you discriminated. Byron is profuse of animosity; but I do believe him to be quite without malice. You have lived among men about the Lakes, who want the vigor necessary for the expansion of animosity, but whose dunghills are warm enough to hatch long egg-strings of malice, after a season.

Southey. It may be so; but why advert to them? In speaking of vigor, surely you cannot mean vigor of intellect? An animal that has been held with lowered nostrils in the Grotto del Cane recovers his senses when he is thrown into the Agnano; but there is no such resuscitation for the writer whose head has been bent over that poetry which, while it intoxicates the brain, deadens or perverts the energies of the heart. In vain do pure waters reflect the heavens to him; his respiration is on the earth and earthly things: and it is not the whispers of wisdom or the touches of affection, it is only the shout of the multitude, that can excite him. It soon falls, and he with it.

Porson. Do not talk in this manner with the ladies, young or old; a little profligacy is very endearing to them.

Southey. Not to those with whom I am likely to talk.

Porson. Before we continue our discussion on the merits of Mr. Wordsworth, and there are many great ones, I must show my inclination to impartiality by adducing a few instances of faultiness in Byron. For you must bear in mind that I am counsel for the crown against your friend, and that it is not my business in this place to call witnesses to his good character.

Southey. You leave me no doubt of that. But do not speak in generalities when you speak of him. Lay your finger on those places in particular which most displease you.

Porson. It would benumb it. Nevertheless, I will do as you bid me; and, if ever I am unjust in a single tittle, reprehend me instantly. But at present, to Byron as I proposed. Give me the volume. Ay, that is it.

Southey. Methinks it smells of his own favorite beverage, gin-and-water.

Porson. No bad perfume after all.

> "Nought of life left, save a quivering
> When his limbs were slightly shivering."

Pray, what does the second line add to the first, beside empty words?

> "Around a slaughter'd army lay."

What follows?

> "No more to combat or to bleed."

Verily! Well; more the pity than the wonder. According to historians (if you doubt my fidelity I will quote them), slaughtered armies have often been in this condition.

> "We sat down and wept by the waters
> Of Babel, and thought of the day
> When our foe, in the hue of his slaughters,
> Made Salem's high places his prey."

A prey "in the hue of his slaughters." This is very pathetic; but not more so than the thought it suggested to me, which is plainer: —

> "We sat down and wept by the waters
> Of Camus, and thought of the day
> When damsels would show their red garters
> In their hurry to scamper away."

Let us see what we can find where this other slip of paper divides the pages.

> "Let he who made thee."

Some of us at Cambridge continue to say, "Let *him* go." Is this grammatical form grown obsolete? Pray, let *I* know. Some of us are also much in the habit of pronouncing *real* as if it were a dissyllable, and *ideal* as if it were a trisyllable. All the Scotch deduct a syllable from each of these words, and Byron's mother was Scotch.

What have we here?

> "And spoil'd her goodly lands to gild his waste."

I profess my abhorrence at *gilding* even a few square leagues of waste.

"Thy fanes, thy temples."

Where is the difference?

"Rustic plough."

There are more of these than of city ploughs or court ploughs.

"Have flung a desolate cloud o'er Venice' lovely walls.

What think you of a desolate cloud?

"O'er Venice' lovely walls"?

Where poets have omitted, as in this instance, the possessive *s*, denoting the genitive case, as we are accustomed to call it, they are very censurable. Few blemishes in style are greater. But here, where no letter *s* precedes it, the fault is the worst. In the next line we find

"Athens' armies."

Further on, he makes Petrarca say that his passion for Laura was a guilty one. If it was, Petrarca did not think it so, and still less would he have said it.

Southey. This arises from his ignorance that *reo* in Italian poetry means not only *guilty*, but *cruel*, and *sorrowful*.

Porson. He fancies that Shakspeare's Forest of Arden is the Belgian Forest of the same name, differently spelled, Ardennes; whereas it began near Stratford-upon-Avon, and extended to Red-ditch and the Ridgeway, the boundary of Warwickshire and Worcestershire, having for its centre the little town Henley, called to this day Henley-in-Arden.

Southey. You will never find in Wordsworth such faults as these.

Porson. Perhaps not; but let us see. I am apprehensive that we may find graver, and without the excuse of flightiness or incitation. We will follow him, if you please, where you attempted (as coopers do in their business more successfully) to draw together the staves of his quarter-cask, by putting a little fire of your own chips in it. Yet they start and stare widely; and even your practised hand will scarcely bring it into such condition as to render it a sound or salable commodity. You are annoyed, I perceive, at this remark. I honor your sensibility. There are, indeed, base souls which genius may illuminate, but cannot elevate.

> "Struck with an ear-ache by all stronger lays,
> They writhe with anguish at another's praise."

Meantime, what exquisite pleasure must you have felt in being the only critic of our age and country laboring for the advancement of those who might be thought your rivals! No other ventured to utter a syllable in behalf of your friend's poetry. While he "wheeled his drony flight," it lay among the thread-papers and patch-work of the sedater housewifes, and was applied by them to the younger part of the family as an antidote against all levity of behavior. The last time we met, you not only defended your fellow-soldier while he was lying on the ground, trodden and wounded and crying out aloud, but you lifted him up on your shoulders in the middle of the fight. Presently we must try our strength again, if you persist in opposing him to the dramatists of Athens.

Southey. You mistake me widely in imagining me to have ranked him with the Greek tragedians, or any great tragedians whatsoever. I only said that, in one single poem, Sophocles or Euripides would probably have succeeded no better.

Porson. This was going far enough. But I will not oppose my unbelief to your belief, which is at all times the pleasanter. Poets, I find, are beginning to hold critics cheap, and are drilling a company out of their own body. At present, in marching they lift up their legs too high, and in firing they shut their eyes.

Southey. There is little use in arguing with the conceited and inexperienced, who immersed in the slough of ignorance cry out, "There you are wrong; there we differ," &c. Wry necks are always stiff, and hot heads are still worse when they grow cool.

Porson. Let me ask you, who being both a poet and a critic are likely to be impartial, whether we who restore the noble forms which time and barbarism have disfigured are not more estimable than those artisans who mould in coarse clay, and cover with plashy chalk, their shepherds and shepherdesses for Bagnigge-Wells?

Southey. I do not deny nor dispute it; but awarding due praise to such critics, of whom the number in our own country is extremely small (bishoprics having absorbed and suffocated half the crew), I must, in defence of those particularly whom they have criticised too severely, profess my opinion that our poetry of late years hath gained to the full as much as it hath lost.

Porson. The sea also of late years, and all other years too, has followed the same law. We have gained by it empty cockle-shells, dead jelly-fish, sand, shingle, and voluminous weeds. On the other hand, we have lost our exuberant meadow-ground, slowly abraded, stealthily bitten off, morsel after morsel; we have lost our fat salt-marshes; we have lost our solid turf, besprinkled with close flowers; we have lost our broad umbrageous fences, and their trees and shrubs and foliage of plants innumerably various; we have lost, in short, every thing that delighted us with its inexhaustible richness, and aroused our admiration at its irregular and unrepressed luxuriance.

Southey. I would detract and derogate from no man; but pardon me if I am more inclined toward him who improves our own literature, than toward him who elucidates any other.

Porson. Our own is best improved by the elucidation of others. Among all the bran in the little bins of Mr. Wordsworth's beer-cellar, there is not a legal quart of that stout old English beverage with which the good Bishop of Dromore regaled us. The buff jerkins we saw in Chevy Chase please me better than the linsey-woolsey which enwraps the puffy limbs of our worthy host at Grassmere.

Southey. Really this, if not random malice, is ill-directed levity. Already you have acquired that fame and station to which nobody could oppose your progress: why not let him have his?

Porson. So he shall; this is the mark I aim at. It is a difficult thing to set a weak man right, and it is seldom worth the trouble; but it is infinitely more difficult, when a man is intoxicated by applauses, to persuade him that he is going astray. The more tender and coaxing we are, the oftener is the elbow jerked into our sides. There are three classes of sufferers under criticism, — the querulous, the acquiescent, and the contemptuous. In the two latter there is usually something of magnanimity; but in the querulous we always find the imbecile, the vain, and the mean-spirited. I do not hear that you ever have condescended to notice any attack on your poetical works, either in note or preface. Meanwhile, your neighbor would allure us into his cottage by setting his sheep-dog at us; which guardian of the premises runs after and snaps at every pebble thrown to irritate him.

Southey. Pray, leave these tropes and metaphors, and acknowledge that Wordsworth has been scornfully treated.

Porson. Those always will be who show one weakness at having been attacked on another. I admire your suavity of temper, and your consciousness of worth; your disdain of obloquy, and your resignation to the destinies of authorship. Never did either poet or lover gain any thing by complaining.

Southey. Such sparks as our critics are in general give neither warmth nor light, and only make people stare and stand out of the way, lest they should fall on them.

Porson. Those who have assaulted you and Mr. Wordsworth are perhaps less malicious than unprincipled; the pursuivants of power, or the running footmen of faction. Your patience is admirable; his impatience is laughable. Nothing is more amusing than to see him raise his bristles and expose his tusk at every invader of his brushwood, every marauder of his hips and haws.

Southey. Among all the races of men, we English are at once the most generous and the most ill-tempered. We all carry sticks in our hands to cut down the heads of the higher poppies.

Porson. A very high poppy, and surcharged with Lethean dew, is that before us. But continue.

Southey. I would have added, that each resents in another any injustice; and resents it indeed so violently as to turn unjust on the opposite side. Wordsworth, in whose poetry you yourself admit there are many and great beauties, will, I am afraid, be tossed out of his balance by a sudden jerk in raising him.

Porson. Nothing more likely. The reaction may be as precipitate as the pull is now violent against him. Injudicious friends will cause him less uneasiness, but will do him greater mischief, than intemperate opponents.

Southey. You cannot be accused of either fault; but you demand too much, and pardon no remissness. However, you have at no time abetted by your example the paltry pelters of golden fruit paled out from them.

Porson. Removed alike from the crowd and the *coterie*, I have always avoided, with timid prudence, the bird-cage walk of literature. I have withholden from Herman and some others a part of what is due to them; and I regret it. Sometimes I have been arrogant, never have I been malicious. Unhappily, I was educated in a school of criticism where the exercises were too gladiatorial. Looking at my elders in it, they appeared to me so ugly — in part from their contortions, and in part from their scars — that I suspected it must be a dangerous thing to wield a scourge of vipers; and I thought it no very creditable appointment to be linkboy or pander at an alley leading down to the Furies. Age and infirmity have rendered me milder than I was. I am loath to fire off my gun in the warren which lies before us; loath to startle the snug little creatures, each looking so comfortable at the mouth of its burrow, or skipping about at short distances, or frisking and kicking up the sand along the thriftless heath. You have shown me some very good poetry in your author; I have some very bad in him to show you. Each of our actions is an incitement to improve him. But what we cannot improve or alter, lies in the constitution of the man: the determination to hold you in one spot until you have heard him through; the reluctance that any thing should be lost; the unconsciousness that the paring is less nutritious and less savory than the core; in short, the prolix, the prosaic; a sickly sameness of color; a sad deficiency of vital heat.

Southey. Where the language is subdued and somewhat cold, there may nevertheless be internal warmth and spirit. There is a paleness in intense fires; they do not flame out nor sparkle. As you know, Mr. Professor, it is only a weak wine that sends the cork up to the ceiling.

Porson. I never was fond of the florid; but I would readily pardon the weak wine you allude to, for committing this misdemeanor. Upon my word, I have no such complaint to make against it. I said little at the time about these poems, and usually say little more on better. In our praises and censures, we should see before us one sole object: instruction. A single well-set post, with a few plain letters upon it, directs us better than fifty that turn about and totter, covered as they may be from top to bottom with coronals and garlands.

Southey. We have about a million critics in Great Britain; not a soul of which critics entertains the slightest doubt of his own infallibility. You, with all your learning and all your canons of criticism, will never make them waver.

Porson. We will not waste our breath on the best of them. Rather let me turn toward you, so zealous, so ardent, so indefatigable a friend, and, if reports are true, so ill-requited. When your client was the ridicule of all the wits in England, of whom Canning and Frere were foremost, by your indignation at injustice he was righted, and more than righted. For although you attributed to him what perhaps was not greatly above his due, yet they who acknowledge your authority and contend under your banner have carried him much further; nay, further, I apprehend, than is expedient or safe; and they will drop him before the day closes, where there is nobody to show the way home.

Southey. Could not you, Mr. Professor, do that good service to him, which others in another province have so often done to you?

Porson. Nobody better, nobody with less danger from interruptions. But I must be even more enthusiastic than you are, if I prefer this excursion to your conversation. My memory, although the strongest part of me, is apt to stagger and swerve under verses piled incompactly. In our last meeting you had him mostly to yourself, and you gave me abundantly of the best; at present, while my gruel is before me, it appears no unseasonable time to throw a little salt into both occasionally, as may suit my palate. You will not be displeased?

Southey. Certainly not, unless you are unjust; nor even then, unless I find the injustice to be founded on ill-will.

Porson. That cannot be. I stand

"Despicere unde queam tales, passimque videre
Errare."

Beside, knowing that my verdicts will be registered and recorded, I dare not utter a hasty or an inconsiderate one. I lay it down as an axiom, that languor is the cause or the effect of most disorders, and is itself the very worst in poetry. Wordsworth's is an instrument which has no trumpet-stop.

Southey. But, such as it is, he blows it well. Surely it is something to have accompanied sound sense with pleasing harmony, whether in verse or prose.

Porson. What is the worth of a musical instrument which has no high key? Even Pan's pipe rises above the baritones; yet I never should mistake it for an organ.

Southey. It is evident that you are ill-disposed to countenance the moderns: I mean principally the living.

Porson. They are less disposed to countenance one another.

Southey. Where there is genius there should be geniality. The curse of quarrelsomeness, of hand against every man, was inflicted on the children of the desert; not on those who pastured their flocks on the fertile banks of the Euphrates, or contemplated the heavens from the elevated ranges of Chaldea.

Porson. Let none be cast down by the malice of their contemporaries, or surprised at the defection of their associates, when he himself who has tended more than any man living to purify the poetry and to liberalize the criticism of his nation, is represented, by one whom he has called "inoffensive and virtuous," as an author all whose poetry is "not worth five shillings," and of whom another has said that "his verses sound like dumb-bells." Such are the expressions of two among your friends and familiars, both under obligations to you for the earliest and weightiest testimony in their favor. It would appear as if the exercise of the poetical faculty left irritation and weakness behind it, depriving its possessor at once of love and modesty, and making him resemble a spoiled child, who most indulges in its frowardness when you exclaim, "What a spoiled child it is!" and carry it crying and kicking out of the room. Your poetical neighbors, I hear, complain bitterly that you never have lauded them at large in your *Critical Reviews.*

Southey. I never have; because one grain of commendation more to the one than the other would make them enemies; and no language of mine would be thought adequate by either to his deserts. Each could not be called the greatest poet of the age; and by such compliance I should have been for ever divested of my authority as a critic. I lost, however, no opportunity of commending heartily what is best in them; and I have never obtruded on any one's notice what is amiss, but carefully concealed it. I wish you were equally charitable.

Porson. I will be; and generous too. There are several things in these volumes, beside that which you recited, containing just thoughts poetically expressed. Few, however, are there which do not contain much of the superfluous, and more of the prosaic. For one nod of approbation, I therefore give two of drowsiness. You accuse me of injustice, not only to this author, but to all the living. Now Byron is living; there is more spirit in Byron: Scott is living; there is more vivacity and variety in Scott. Byron exhibits *disjecti membra poetæ;* and strong muscles quiver throughout, but rather like galvanism than healthy life. There is a freshness in all Scott's scenery; a vigor and distinctness in all his characters. He seems the brother-in-arms of Froissart. I admire his *Marmion* in particular. Give me his massy claymore, and keep in the cabinet or the boudoir the jewelled hilt of the oriental dirk. The pages which my forefinger keeps open for you contain a thing in the form of a sonnet; a thing to which, for insipidity, *tripe au naturel* is a dainty.

"Great men have been among us, hands that penned
And tongues that uttered wisdom; better none.
The later Sidney, Marvel, Harrington,
Young Vane, and others who called Milton friend."

When he potted these fat lampreys, he forgot the condiments, which the finest lampreys want; but how close and flat he has laid them! I see nothing in poetry, since

"Four-and-twenty fiddlers all in a row,"

fit to compare with it. How the good men and true stand, shoulder to shoulder, and keep one another up!

Southey. In these censures and sarcasms, you forget

"Alcandrumque Haliumque Noemonaque Prytanimque."

From the Spanish I could bring forward many such.

Porson. But here is a sonnet; and the sonnet admits not that approach to the prosaic which is allowable in the ballad, particularly in the ballad of action. For which reason I never laughed, as many did, at

"Lord Lion King at Arms."

Scott knew what he was about. In his chivalry, and in all the true, gayety is mingled with strength, and facility with majesty. Lord Lion may be defended by the practice of the older poets, who describe the like scenes and adventures. There is much resembling it, for instance, in *Chevy Chase*. *Marmion* is a poem of chivalry, partaking (in some measure) of the ballad, but rising in sundry places to the epic, and closing with a battle worthy of the *Iliad*. Ariosto has demonstrated that a romance may be so adorned by the apparatus, and so elevated by the spirit of poetry, as to be taken for an epic; but it has a wider field of its own, with outlying forests and chases. Spanish and Italian poetry often seems to run in extremely slender veins through a vast extent of barren ground.

Southey. But often, too, it is pure and plastic. The republicans, whose compact phalanx you have unsparingly ridiculed in Wordsworth's sonnet, make surely no sorrier a figure than

"A Don Alvaro de Luna
Condestable de Castilla
El Re Don Juan el Segundo."

Porson. What an admirable Spanish scholar must Mr. Wordsworth be! How completely has he transfused into his own compositions all the spirit of those verses! Nevertheless, it is much to be regretted that, in resolving on simplicity, he did not place himself under the tuition of Burns; which quality Burns could have taught him in perfection: but others he never could have imparted to such an auditor. He would have sung in vain to him

"Scots wha hae wi' Wallace bled," —

a song more animating than ever Tyrtæus sang to the fife before the Spartans. But simplicity in Burns is never stale and unprofitable. In Burns there is no waste of words out of an ill-shouldered sack; no troublesome running backward and forward of little, idle, ragged ideas; no ostentation of sentiment in the surtout of selfishness. Where was I? —

> "Better none . . . The later Sidney . . . Young Vane . . .
> These moralists could act . . . and . . . comprehend!"

We might expect as much if "*none were better.*"

> "They knew how genuine glory was . . . put on!"

What is genuine is not *put on.*

> "Taught us how rightfully . . . a nation" . . .

Did what? Took up arms? — No such thing. *Remonstrated?* — No, nor that. What then? — Why, "*shone!*" I am inclined to take the *shine* out of him for it. But how did the nation "rightfully *shine?*" — In *splendor!*

> "Taught us how rightfully a nation shone
> In splendor!"

Now the secret is out; make the most of it. Another thing they taught us, —

> "What strength was."

They did indeed, with a vengeance. Furthermore, they taught us what we never could have expected from such masters, —

> "What strength was . . . *that could not bend*
> But in magnanimous *meekness.*

Brave Oliver! brave and honest Ireton! We know pretty well where your magnanimity lay; we never could so cleverly find out your meekness. Did you leave it peradventure on the window-seat at Whitehall? The "later Sydney and young Vane, who could call Milton friend," and Milton himself, were gentlemen of your kidney, and they were all as meek as Moses with their arch-enemy.

> "Perpetual emptiness: unceasing change."

How could the *change* be unceasing if the *emptiness* was perpetual?

"No single volume paramount: no *code*.'

That is untrue. There is a Code, and the best in Europe: there was none promulgated under our Commonwealth.

"No master-spirit, no determined road,
And equally a want of books and men."

Southey. I do not agree in this opinion; for although of late years France hath exhibited no man of exalted wisdom or great worth, yet surely her Revolution cast up several both intellectual and virtuous. But, like fishes in dark nights and wintry weather allured by deceptive torches, they came to the surface only to be speared.

Porson. Although there were many deplorable ends in the French Revolution, there was none so deplorable as the last sonnet's. So diffuse and pointless and aimless is not only this, but fifty more, that the author seems to have written them in hedger's gloves, on blotting paper. If he could by any contrivance have added to

"Perpetual emptiness unceasing change,"

or some occasional change at least, he would have been more tolerable.

Southey. He has done it lately: he has written, although not yet published, a vast number of sonnets on Capital Punishment.

Porson. Are you serious? Already he has inflicted it far and wide, for divers attempts made upon him to extort his meaning.

Southey. Remember, poets superlatively great have composed things below their dignity. Suffice it to mention only Milton's translation of the Psalms.

Porson. Milton was never half so wicked a regicide as when he lifted up his hand and smote King David. He has atoned for it, however, by composing a magnificent psalm of his own, in the form of a sonnet.

Southey. You mean on the massacre of the Protestants in Piedmont? This is indeed the noblest of sonnets.

Porson. There are others in Milton comparable to it, but none elsewhere. In the poems of Shakspeare, which are printed as sonnets, there sometimes is a singular strength and intensity of thought, with little of that imagination which was afterward to raise him highest in the universe of poetry. Even the interest we take in the private life of this miraculous man cannot keep the volume in our hands long together. We acknowledge great power, but we experience great weariness. Were I a poet, I would much rather have written the *Allegro* or the *Penseroso* than all those, and moreover than nearly all that portion of our metre which, wanting a definite term, is ranged under the capitulary of lyric.

Southey. Evidently you dislike the sonnet; otherwise there are very many in Wordsworth which would have obtained your approbation.

Porson. I have no objection to see mince-meat put into small patty-pans, all of equal size, with ribs at odd distances: my objection lies mainly where I find it without salt or succulence. Milton was glad, I can imagine, to seize upon the sonnet, because it restricted him from a profuse expression of what soon becomes tiresome, — praise. In addressing it to the Lord Protector, he was aware that prolixity of speech was both unnecessary and indecorous: in addressing it to Vane, and Lawrence, and Lawes, he felt that friendship is never the stronger for running through long periods; and in addressing it to

"Captain, or Colonel, or Knight-at-Arms,"

he might be confident that fourteen such glorious lines were a bulwark sufficient for his protection against a royal army.

Southey. I am highly gratified at your enthusiasm. A great poet represents a great portion of the human race. Nature delegated to Shakspeare the interests and direction of the whole: to Milton a smaller part, but with plenary power over it; and she bestowed on him such fervor and majesty of eloquence as on no other mortal in any age.

Porson. Perhaps, indeed, not on Demosthenes himself.

Southey. Without many of those qualities of which a loftier genius is constituted, without much fire, without a wide extent of range, without an eye that can look into the heart, or an organ that can touch it, Demosthenes had great dexterity and great force. By the union of these properties he always was impressive on his audience; but his orations bear less testimony to the seal of genius than the dissertations of Milton do.

Porson. You judge correctly that there are several parts of genius in which Demosthenes is deficient, although in none whatever of the consummate orator. In that character there is no necessity for stage-exhibitions of wit, however well it may be received in an oration from the most persuasive and the most stately: Demosthenes, when he catches at wit, misses it, and falls flat in the mire. But by discipline and training, by abstinence from what is florid and too juicy, and by loitering with no idle words on his way, he acquired the hard muscles of a wrestler, and nobody could stand up against him with success or impunity.

Southey. Milton has equal strength, without an abatement of beauty: not a sinew sharp or rigid, not a vein varicose or inflated. Hercules killed robbers and ravishers with his knotted club; he cleansed also royal stables by turning whole rivers into them: Apollo, with no labor or effort, overcame the Python; brought round him, in the full accordance of harmony, all the Muses; and illuminated with his sole splendor the universal world. Such is the difference I see between Demosthenes and Milton.

Porson. Would you have any thing more of Mr. Wordsworth, after the contemplation of two men who resemble a god and a demi-god in the degrees of power?

Southey. I do not believe you can find in another of his poems so many blemishes and debilities as you have pointed out.

Porson. Within the same space, perhaps not. But my complaint is not against a poverty of thought or expression here and there; it is against the sickliness and prostration of the whole body. I should never have thought it worth my while to renew and continue our conversation on it, unless that frequently such discussions lead to something better than the thing discussed; and unless we had abundant proofs that heaviness, taken opportunely, is the parent of hilarity. The most beautiful iris rises in bright expanse out of the minutest watery particles. Little fond as I am of quoting my own authority, permit me to repeat, in this sick chamber, an observation I once made in another almost as sick:—

"When wine and gin are gone and spent,
Small beer is then most excellent."

But small beer itself is not equally small nor equally vapid. Our friend's poetry, like a cloak of gum-elastic, makes me sweat without keeping me warm. With regard to the texture and sewing, what think you of

"No thorns can pierce *those* tender feet,
Whose *life* was as the violet sweet"?

Southey. It should have been written "*her* tender feet;" because, as the words stand, it is the *life* of the tender feet that is sweet as the violet.

Porson. If there is a Wordsworth school, it certainly is not a grammar school. Is there any lower? It must be a school for very little boys, and a rod should be hung up in the centre. Take another sample:—

"There is a *blessing* in the air,
Which *seems* a sense of joy to yield."

Was ever line so inadequate to its purpose as the second? If the blessing is evident and certain, the sense of joy arising from it must be evident and certain also, not merely seeming. Whatever only seems to yield a sense of joy is scarcely a blessing. The verse adds nothing to the one before, but rather tends to empty it of the little it conveys.

"And shady groves, for recreation *framed*."

"Recreation!" and in groves that are "*framed!*"

"With high respect and gratitude sincere."

This is indeed a good end of a letter, but not of a poem. I am weary of decomposing these lines of sawdust: they verily would disgrace any poetry-professor.

Southey. Acknowledging the prosaic flatness of the last verse you quoted, the sneer with which you pronounced the final word seems to me unmerited.

Porson. That is not gratitude which is not "sincere." A scholar ought to write nothing so incorrect as the phrase; a poet nothing so imbecile as the verse.

Southey. *Sincere* conveys a stronger sense to most understandings than the substantive alone would; words which we can do without are not therefore useless. Many may be of service and efficacy to certain minds, which other minds pass over inobservantly; and there are many which, however light in themselves, wing the way for a well-directed point that could never reach the heart without it.

Porson. This is true in general, but here inapplicable. I will tell you what is applicable on all occasions, both in poetry and prose — *αἰεὶ ἀριστεύειν* — without reference to weak or common minds. If we give an entertainment, we do not set on the table pap and panada, just because a guest may be liable to indigestion: we rather send these dismal dainties to his chamber, and treat our heartier friends *opiparously*. I am wandering. If we critics are logical, it is the most that can be required at our hands: we should go out of our record if we were philosophical.

Southey. Without both qualities not even the lightest poetry should be reprehended. They do not exclude wit, which sometimes shows inexactness where mensuration would be tardy and incommodious.

Porson. I fear I am at my wits' end under this exhausted receiver. Here are, however, a few more *Excerpta* for you. I shall add but few; although I have marked with my pencil, in these two small volumes, more than seventy spots of sterility or quagmire. Mr. Wordsworth has hitherto had for his critics men who uncovered and darkened his blemishes in order to profit by them, and afterward expounded his songs and expatiated on his beauties in order to obtain the same result, — like picture-cleaners, who besmear a picture all over with washy dirtiness, then wipe away one-half of it, making it whiter than it ever was before. And nothing draws such crowds to the window.

I must make you walk with me up and down the deck, else nothing could keep you from sickness in this hull. How do you feel? Will you sit down again?

Southey. I will hear you, and bear with you.

Porson.

> "I on the earth will go plodding on
> By myself cheerfully, till the day is done."

In what other author do you find such heavy trash?

"How do you live, and what is it you do?"

Show me any thing like this in the worst poet that ever lived, and I will acknowledge that I am the worst critic. A want of sympathy is sometimes apparent in the midst of poetical pretences. Before us a gang of gypsies, — perhaps after a long journey, perhaps after a marriage, perhaps after the birth of a child among them, — are found resting a whole day in one place. What is the reflection on it?

"The *mighty* moon;
This way she looks, *as if at them,*
And they regard her not!
Oh! better wrong and strife;
Rather vain deeds or evil than such life!"

Mr. Southey! is this the man you represented to me, in our last conversation, as innocent and philosophical? What! better be guilty of robbery or bloodshed than not be looking at the moon? — better let the fire go out and the children cry with hunger and cold? The philanthropy of poets is surely ethereal, and is here, indeed, a matter of moonshine.

Southey. The sentiment is indefensible. But in the stoutest coat a stitch may give way somewhere.

Porson. Our business is, in this place, with humanity. We will go forward, if you please, to religion. Poets may take great liberties; but not much above the nymphs: they must be circumspect and orderly with gods and goddesses of any account and likelihood. Although the ancients laid many children at the door of Jupiter which he never could be brought to acknowledge, yet it is downright impiety to attribute to the God of Mercy, as his, so ill-favored a vixen as Slaughter.

Southey. We might enter into a long disquisition on this subject.

Porson. God forbid we should do all we might do! Have you rested long enough? Come along, then, to Goody Blake's.

"*Old* Goody Blake was *old* and poor."

What is the consequence?

"Ill-fed she was, and thinly clad,
And any man who passed her door
Might see" . . .

What might he see? —

"How *poor* a hut she had."

Southey. Ease and simplicity are two expressions often confounded and misapplied. We usually find ease arising from long practice, and sometimes from a delicate ear without it; but simplicity may be rustic and awkward, of which it must be acknowledged there are innumerable examples in these volumes. But surely it would be a pleasanter occupation to recollect the many that are natural, and to search out the few that are graceful.

Porson. We have not yet taken our leave of Goody Blake.

"All day she spun in her *poor* dwelling,
And then 'twas three hours' work at night;
Alas! 'twas hardly worth the telling."

I am quite of that opinion.

"But when the ice our streams *did fetter*," —

Which was the fetterer? We may guess, but not from the grammar, —

"Oh then how her old bones would shake!
You would have said, *if you had met her*," —

Now, what would you have said? "Goody! come into my house, and warm yourself with a pint of ale at the kitchen fire"? No such naughty thing, —

"You would have said, if you had met her,
'Twas a hard time for Goody Blake!"

Southey. If you said only *that*, you must have been the colder of the two, and God had done less for you than for her.

Porson.

"Sad case it was, *as you may think,*
As every one who knew her says."

Now, mind ye! all this balderdash is from "Poems purely of the Imagination." Such is what is notified to us in the title-page. In spite of a cold below zero, I hope you are awake, Mr. Southey! How do you find nose and ears? — all safe and sound? Are the acoustics in tolerable order for harmony? Listen then. Here follows "An Anecdote for Fathers, showing how the practice of Lying may be taught." Such is the title, a somewhat prolix one: but for the soul of me I cannot find out the lie, with all my experience in those matters.

"Now tell me *had* you rather be?"

Cannot our writers perceive that "had be" is not English? "Would you rather be" is grammatical. "*I'd*" sounds much the same when it signifies "I would." The latter with slighter contraction is "I'ou'd;" hence the corruption goes farther.

Southey. This is just and true; but we must not rest too often, too long, or too pressingly, on verbal criticism.

Porson. Do you, so accurate a grammarian, say this? To pass over such vulgarisms, — which indeed the worst writers seldom fall into, — if the words are silly, idle, or inapplicable, what becomes of the sentence? Those alone are to be classed as verbal critics who can catch and comprehend no more than a word here and there, and who lay more stress upon it, if faulty, than upon all the beauties in the best authors. But unless we, who sit perched and watchful on a higher branch than the word-catchers,* and who live on somewhat more substantial than syllables, do catch the word, that which is dependent on the word must escape us also. Now do me the favor to read the rest; for I have only just breath enough to converse, and your voice will give advantages to the poetry which mine cannot.

Southey (*reads*).

"In careless mood he look'd at me,
While still I held him by the arm,
And said, 'At Kilve I'd rather be
Than here at Liswyn-farm.'
Now, little Edward, *say why so*,
My little Edward, *tell me why*."

Porson. Where is the difference of meaning betwixt

"Little Edward, *say why so*,"

and

"Little Edward, *tell me why*"?

---

* "Like word-catchers that live on syllables." — *Pope.*

Southey (*reads*).

"I cannot tell, I do not know."

Porson. Again, where is the difference between "I cannot tell" and "I do not know"?

Southey (*reads*).

"Why, this is strange, said I."

Porson. And I join in the opinion, if he intends it for poetry.

Southey (*reads*).

"For here are woods, hills smooth and warm, —
There surely must some reason be."

Porson. This is among the least awkward of his inversions, which are more frequent in him, and more awkward, than in any of his contemporaries. Somewhat less so would be

"Surely some reason there must be,"

or—

"Some reason surely there must be,"

or—

"Some reason there must surely be."

Without ringing more changes, which we might do, he had the choice of four inversions, and he has taken the worst.

Southey (*reads*).

"His head he raised : there was *in sight*,
It caught his eye, he saw it plain," —

Porson. What tautology, what trifling!

Southey (*reads*), —

"Upon the house-top, glittering bright,
A broad and gilded vane."

Porson. Can we wonder that the boy saw "*plain*" "a broad and gilded vane" on the house-top just before him?

Southey (*reads*).

"Thus did the boy his tongue *unlock*," —

Porson. I wish the father had kept the Bramah key in his breeches pocket.

Southey (*reads*), —

"And eased his mind with this reply," —

Porson. When he had written "did unlock," he should likewise have written "and ease," not "and eased."

Southey (*reads*), —

"At Kilve there was no weather-cock,
And that's the reason why.
O dearest, dearest boy ! my heart
For better lore would seldom yearn,
Could I but teach the hundredth part
Of what from thee I learn."

Porson. What is flat ought to be plain ; but who can expound to me the thing here signified ? Who can tell me where is the lie, and which is the liar? If the lad told a lie, why praise him so ? And if he spoke the obvious truth, what has he taught the father? "The hundredth part" of the lore communicated by the child to the parent may content *him ;* but whoever is contented with a hundredfold more than all they both together have given *us* cannot be very ambitious of becoming a senior wrangler. These, in good truth, are verses

"Pleni ruris et inficetiarum."

"Dank, limber verses, stuffed with lakeside sedges,
And propped with rotten stakes from broken hedges."

In the beginning of these I forbore to remark

"On Kilve by the *green* sea."

When I was in Somersetshire, Neptune had not parted with his cream-colored horses, and there was no *green* sea within the horizon. The ancients used to give to the sea the color they saw in it : Homer *dark-blue*, as in the Hellespont, the Ionian, and Ægæan ; Virgil *blue-green*, as along the coast of Naples and Sorrento. I suspect, from his character, he never went a league off land. He kept usually, both in person and poetry, to the *vada cærula*.

Southey. But he hoisted purple sails, and the mother of his Æneas was at the helm.

Porson. How different from Mr. Wordsworth's wash-tub, pushed on the sluggish lake by a dumb idiot! We must leave the sea-shore for the ditch-side, and get down to "the small Celandine." I will now relieve you: give me the book.

> "Pleasures newly found are sweet,"—

What a discovery! I never heard of any pleasures that are not,—

> "When they lie about our feet."

Does that make them the sweeter?

> "February last,"—

How poetical!

> "February last, my heart
> First at sight of thee was glad;
> All unheard-of as thou art,
> Thou must needs, *I think*, have had,
> Celandine! and long ago,
> Praise of which I nothing know."

What an inversion! A club-foot is not enough, but the heel is where the toe should be.

> "*I have not a doubt but he*
> *Whosoe'er the man might be*,
> Who the first with pointed rays
> (*Workman worthy to be sainted*)
> Set the signboard in a blaze," &c.

Really, is there any girl of fourteen whose poetry, being like this, the fondest mother would lay before her most intimate friends? If a taste for what the French call *niaiserie* were prevalent, he who should turn his ridicule so effectively against it as to put it entirely out of fashion would perform a far greater service than that glorious wit, Cervantes, who shattered the last helmet of knight-errantry. For in knight-errantry there was the stout, there was the strenuous, there was sound homeliness under courtly guise, and the ornamental was no impediment to the manly. But in *niaiserie* there are ordinarily the debilitating fumes of self-conceit, and nothing is there about it but what is abject and ignoble. Shall we go on?

Southey. As you heard me patiently when we met before, it is fair and reasonable that I should attend to you, now you have examined more carefully what I recommended to your perusal. But I do not understand your merriment.

Porson. My merriment is excited now, and was excited on a former occasion, by the fervor of your expression that "Pindar would not have braced a poem to more vigor, nor Euripides have breathed into it more tenderness and passion."

Southey. I spoke of the *Laodamia.*

Porson. Although I gave way to pleasantry instead of arguing the point with you, I had a great deal more to say, Mr. Southey, than I said at the first starting of so heavy a runner in his race with Pindar. We will again walk over a part of the ground.

> "With sacrifice before the rising morn
> Performed, my slaughtered lord *have I* '*required,*'
> And in thick darkness, amid shades forlorn,
> Him of the infernal gods *have I* '*desired.*'"

I only remember, at the time, that the second and fourth verses terminate too much alike. "Desired" may just as well be where "required" is, and "required" where "desired" is: both are wretchedly weak, and both are preceded by the same words, "have I."

Southey. He has corrected them at your suggestion; not indeed much (if any thing) for the better; and he has altered the conclusion, making it more accordant with morality and Christianity, but somewhat less perhaps with Greek manners and sentiments as they existed in the time of the Trojan war.

Porson. Truly, it was far enough from these before. Acknowledge that the fourth line is quite unnecessary, and that the word "performed," in the second, is prosaic.

Southey. I would defend the whole poem.

Porson. To defend the whole, in criticism as in warfare, you must look with peculiar care to the weakest part. In our last conversation, you expressed a wish that I should examine the verses "analytically and severely." Had I done it severely, you would have caught me by the wrist and have intercepted the stroke. Show me, if you can, a single instance of falsity or unfairness in any of these remarks. If you cannot, pray indulge me at least in as much hilarity as my position, between a sick bed and a sorry book, will allow me.

Southey. I must catch the wrist here. The book, as you yourself conceded, comprehends many beautiful things.

Porson. I have said it, I have repeated it, and I will maintain it; but there are more mawkish. This very room has many things of value in it; yet the empty phials are worth nothing, and several of the others are uninviting. Beside yourself, I know scarcely a critic in England sufficiently versed and sufficiently candid to give a correct decision on our poets. All others have their parties; most have their personal friends. On the side opposite to these you find no few morose and darkling, who conjure up the phantom of an enemy in every rising reputation. You are too wise and too virtuous to resemble them. On this cool green bank of literature you stand alone. I always have observed that the herbage is softest and finest in elevated places; and that we may repose with most safety and pleasantness on lofty minds. The little folks who congregate beneath you seem to think of themselves as Pope thought of the women :—

"The *critic* who deliberates is lost."

Southey. Hence random assertions, heats, animosities, missiles of small wit, clouds hiding every object under them, forked lightnings of ill-directed censure, and thunders of applause lost in the vacuity of space. I do not find that our critics are fond of suggesting any emendations of the passages they censure in their contemporaries, as you have done in the ancients. Will not you tell me, for the benefit of the author, if there is any thing in the *Lyrical Ballads* which you could materially improve?

Porson. Tell me first if you can turn a straw into a walking-stick. When you have done this, I will try what I can do. But I never can do that for Mr. Wordsworth which I have sometimes done for his betters. His verses are as he wrote them, and we must leave them as they are; theirs are not so, and faults committed by transcribers or printers may be corrected. In *Macbeth*, for example, we read, —

"The raven himself is hoarse,
That croaks the fatal entrance of Duncan," &c.

Is there any thing marvellous in a raven being hoarse?—which is implied by the word "himself;" that is to say, *even* the raven, &c. Shakspeare wrote one letter more: "The raven himself is hoarser."

Southey. Surely you could easily correct in the *Lyrical Ballads* faults as obvious.

Porson. If they were as well worth my attention.

Southey. Many are deeply interested by the simple tales they convey in such plain easy language.

Porson. His language is often harsh and dissonant, and his gait is like one whose waistband has been cut behind. There may be something "interesting" in the countenance of the sickly, and even of the dead; but it is only life that can give us enjoyment. Many beside lexicographers place in the same line *simplicity* and *silliness*: they cannot separate them as we can. They think us monsters because we do not see what they see, and because we see plainly what they never can see at all. There is often most love where there is the least acquaintance with the object loved. So it is with these good people who stare at the odd construction of our minds. Homely and poor thoughts may be set off by facility and gracefulness of language; here they often want both.

Southey. Harmonious words render ordinary ideas acceptable; less ordinary, pleasant; novel and ingenious ones, delightful. As pictures and statues, and living beauty too, show better by *music-light*, so is poetry irradiated, vivified, glorified, and raised into immortal life by harmony.

Porson. Ay, Mr. Southey; and another thing may be noticed. The Muses should be as slow to loosen the zone as the Graces * are. The poetical form like the human, to be beautiful, must be succinct. When we grow corpulent, we are commonly said to *lose our figure*. By this loss of figure we are reduced and weakened. So, there not being bone nor muscle nor blood enough in your client to rectify and support his accretions, he collapses into unswathable flabbiness. We must never disturb him in this condition, which appears to be thought, in certain parts of the country, as much a peculiar mark of Heaven's favor as idiocy is among the Turks. I have usually found his sticklers, like those good folks, dogmatical and dull. One of them lately tried to persuade me that he never is so highly poetical as when he is deeply metaphysical. When I stared, he smiled benignly and said, with a deep sigh that relieved us both, "*Ah! you may be a Grecian!*" He then quoted fourteen German poets of the first order, and expressed his compassion for Æschylus and Homer.

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* Zonamque segnes solvere Gratiæ.

Southey. What a blessing are metaphysics to our generation! A poet or other who can make nothing clear, can stir up enough sediment to render the bottom of a basin as invisible as the deepest gulf in the Atlantic. The shallowest pond, if turbid, has depth enough for a goose to hide its head in.

Porson. I quoted to my instructor in criticism the *Anecdote for Fathers:* he assured me it is as clear as day; not meaning a London day in particular, such as this. But there are sundry gentlemen who, like cats, see clearly in the dark, and far from clearly anywhere else. Hold them where if they were tractable and docile you might show them your objections, and they will swear and claw at you to show how spiteful you are. Others say they wonder that judicious men differ from them. No doubt they differ; and there is but one reason for it, which is because they are so. Again, there are the gentle and conciliatory, who say merely that they cannot quite think with you. Have they thought at all? Granting both premises, have they thought or can they think rightly?

Southey. To suppose the majority can, is to suppose an absurdity; and especially on subjects which require so much preparatory study, such a variety of instruction, such deliberation, delicacy, and refinement. When I have been told, as I often have been, that I shall find very few of my opinion, certainly no compliment was intended me; yet there are few, comparatively, whom Nature has gifted with intuition or exquisite taste; few whose ideas have been drawn, modelled, marked, chiselled, and polished in a *studio* well lighted from above. The opinion of a thousand millions who are ignorant or ill-informed is not equal to the opinion of only one who is wiser. This is too self-evident for argument; yet we hear about the common-sense of mankind! — a common-sense which, unless the people receive it from their betters, leads them only into common error. If such is the case — and we have the testimony of all ages for it — in matters which have most attracted their attention, matters in which their nearest interests are mainly concerned, — in politics, in religion, in the education of their families, — how greatly, how surpassingly must it be in those which require a peculiar structure of understanding, a peculiar endowment of mind, a peculiar susceptibility, and almost an undivided application! In what regards poetry, I should just as soon expect a sound judgment of its essentials from a boatman or a wagoner, as from the usual set of persons we meet in society; persons not uneducated, but deriving their intelligence from little gutters and drains round about. The mud is easily raised to the surface in so shallow a receptacle, and nothing is seen distinctly or clearly. Whereas the humbler man has received no false impressions, and may therefore to a limited extent be right. As for books in general, it is only with men like you that I ever open my lips upon them in conversation. In my capacity of reviewer, dispassionate by temperament, equitable by principle, and moreover for fear of offending God and of suffering in my conscience, I dare not leave behind me in my writings either a false estimate or a frivolous objection.

Porson. Racy wine comes from the high vineyard. There is a spice of the scoundrel in most of our literary men; an itch to filch and detract in the midst of fair-speaking and festivity. This is the reason why I never have much associated with them. There is also another: we have nothing in common but the alphabet. The most popular of our critics have no heart for poetry; it is morbidly sensitive on one side, and utterly callous on the other. They dandle some little poet, and will never let you take him off their knees; him they feed to bursting with their curds and whey. Another they warn off the premises, and will give him neither a crust nor a crumb until they hear he has succeeded to a large estate in popularity, with plenty of dependants; then they sue and supplicate to be admitted among the number: and lastly, when they hear of his death, they put on mourning, and advertise to raise a monument or a club-room to his memory. You, Mr. Southey, will always be considered the soundest and the fairest of our English critics; and, indeed, to the present time you have been the only one of very delicate perception in poetry. But your admirable good-nature has thrown a costly veil over many defects and some deformities.

To guide our aspirants, you have given us (and here accept my thanks for them) several good *inscriptions*, much nearer the style of antiquity than any others in our language, and better, indeed much better, than the Italian ones of Chiabrera. I myself have nothing original about me; but here is an inscription which perhaps you will remember in Theocritus,* and translated to the best of my ability: —

INSCRIPTION ON A STATUE OF LOVE.

"Mild he may be, and innocent to view,
Yet who on earth can answer for him? You
Who touch the little god, mind what ye do!

"Say not that none has caution'd you; although
Short be his arrow, slender be his bow,
The King Apollo's never wrought such woe."

This, and one petty skolion, are the only things I have attempted. The skolion is written by Geron: —

"He who in waning age would moralize,
With leaden finger weighs down joyous eyes;
Youths too, with all they say, can only tell
What maids know well:

"And yet if they are kind, they hear it out
As patiently as if they clear'd a doubt.
I will not talk like either. Come with me;
Look at the tree!

"Look at the tree while still some leaves are green;
Soon must they fall. Ah! in the space between
Lift those long eyelashes above your book,
For the last look!"

Southey. I cannot recollect them in the Greek.

Porson. Indeed! Perhaps I dreamed it then; for Greek often plays me tricks in my dreams.

Southey. I wish it would play them oftener with our poets. It seems to entertain a peculiar grudge against the most celebrated of them.

Porson. Our conversation has been enlivened and enriched by what seemed sufficiently sterile in its own nature; but, by tossing it about, we have made it useful. Just as certain lands are said to profit by scrapings from the turnpike-road. After this sieving, after this pounding and trituration of the coarser particles, do you really find in Mr. Wordsworth such a vigor and variety, such a selection of thoughts and images, as authorize you to rank him with Scott and Burns and Cowper?

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* Where?

Southey. Certainly not; but that is no reason why he should be turned into ridicule on all occasions. Must he be rejected and reviled as a poet because he wishes to be also a philosopher? — or must he be taunted and twitted for weakness because by his nature he is quiescent?

Porson. No, indeed; though much of this quiescency induces debility, and is always a sign of it in poetry. Let poets enjoy their sleep; but let them not impart it, nor take it amiss if they are shaken by the shoulder for the attempt. I reprehended at our last meeting, as severely as you yourself did, those mischievous children who played their pranks with him in his easy-chair; and I drove away from him those old women who brought him their drastics from the Edinburgh Dispensary. Poor souls! they are all swept off. Sydney Smith, the wittiest man alive, could not keep them up, by administering a nettle and a shove to this unsaved remnant of the Baxter Christians.

Southey. The heaviest of them will kick at you the most viciously. Castigation is not undue to him, for he has snipped off as much as he could pinch from every author of reputation in his time. It is less ungenerous to expose such people than to defend them.

Porson. Let him gird up his loins, however, and be gone; we will turn where correction ought to be milder, and may be more efficient. Give a trifle of strength and austerity to the squashiness of our friend's poetry, and reduce in almost every piece its quantity to half. Evaporation will render it likelier to keep. Without this process, you will shortly have it only in the form of extracts. You talk of philosophy in poetry, and in poetry let it exist; but let its veins run through a poem as our veins run through the body, and never be too apparent; for the prominence of veins, in both alike, is a symptom of weakness, feverishness, and senility. On the ground where we are now standing, you have taken one end of the blanket and I the other; but it is I chiefly who have shaken the dust out. Nobody can pass us without seeing it rise against the sunlight, and observing what a heavy cloud there is of it. While it lay quietly in the flannel, it lay without suspicion.

Southey. Let us return, if you please, to one among the partakers of your praise, whose philosophy is neither obtrusive nor abstruse. I am highly gratified by your commendation of Cowper, than whom there never was a more virtuous or more amiable man. In some passages, he stands quite unrivalled by any recent poet of this century: none, indeed, modern or ancient, has touched the heart more delicately, purely, and effectively, than he has done in *Crazy Kate*, in Lines on his *Mother's Picture*, in *Omai*, and on hearing *Bells at a Distance.*

Porson. Thank you for the mention of bells. Mr. Wordsworth, I remember, speaks in an authoritative and scornful tone of censure on Cowper's "church-going" bell, treating the expression as a gross impropriety and absurdity. True enough, the *church-going* bell does not go to church any more than I do; neither does the *passing* bell pass any more than I; nor does the *curfew* bell cover any more fire than is contained in Mr. Wordsworth's poetry: but the church-going bell is that which is rung for people going to church; the passing-bell, for those passing to heaven; the curfew-bell, for the burgesses and villagers to cover their fires. He would not allow me to be called *well-spoken*, nor you to be called *well-read;* and yet, by this expression, I should mean to signify that you have read much, and I should employ another in signifying that you have been much read. Incomparably better is Cowper's *Winter* than Virgil's, which is indeed a disgrace to the Georgics; or than Thomson's, which in places is grand. But would you on the whole compare Cowper with Dryden?

Southey. Dryden possesses a much richer store of thoughts, expatiates upon more topics, has more vigor, vivacity, and animation. He is always shrewd and penetrating, explicit and perspicuous, concise where conciseness is desirable, and copious where copiousness can yield delight. When he aims at what is highest in poetry, the dramatic, he falls below his *Fables.* However, I would not compare the poetical power of Cowper with his; nor would I, as some have done, pit

Young against him. Young is too often fantastical and frivolous: he pins butterflies to the pulpit-cushion; he suspends against the grating of the charnel-house colored lamps and comic transparencies, — Cupid, and the cat and the fiddle; he opens a store-house filled with minute particles of heterogeneous wisdom and unpalatable gobbets of ill-concocted learning, contributions from the classics, from the schoolmen, from homilies, and from farces. What you expect to be an elegy turns out an epigram; and when you think he is bursting into tears, he laughs in your face. Do you go with him into his closet, prepared for an admonition or a rebuke, he shakes his head, and you sneeze at the powder and perfumery of his peruke. Wonder not if I prefer to his pungent essences the incense which Cowper burns before the altar.

Porson. Young was, in every sense of the word, an ambitious man. He had strength, but wasted it. Blair's *Grave* has more spirit in it than the same portion of the *Night Thoughts:* but never was poetry so ill put together; never was there so good a poem, of the same extent, from which so great a quantity of what is mere trash might be rejected. The worst blemish in it is the ridicule and scoffs cast not only on the violent and grasping, but equally on the gentle, the beautiful, the studious, the eloquent, and the manly. It is ugly enough to be carried quietly to the grave; it is uglier to be hissed and hooted into it. Even the quiet astronomer,

"With study pale, and midnight vigils spent,"

is not permitted to depart in peace, but (of all men in the world!) is called a "proud man," and is coolly and flippantly told that

"Great heights are hazardous to the weak head;"

which the poet might have turned into a verse, if he had tried again, as we will: —

"To the weak head, great heights are hazardous."

In the same funny style, he writes, —

"Oh that some courteous ghost would blab it out,
What 'tis they are."

Courtesy and blabbing, in this upper world of ours, are thought to be irreconcilable; but blabbing may not be indecorous nor derogatory to the character of courtesy in a ghost. However, the expression is an uncouth one; and when we find it so employed, we suspect the ghost cannot have been keeping good company, but, as the king said to the miller of Mansfield, that his "courtesy is but small." Cowper plays in the play-ground, and not in the churchyard. Nothing of his is out of place or out of season. He possessed a rich vein of ridicule; but he turned it to good account, opening it on prig parsons, and graver and worse impostors. He was among the first who put to flight the mischievous little imps of allegory, so cherished and fondled by the Wartons. They are as bad in poetry as mice in a cheese-room. You poets are still rather too fond of the unsubstantial. Some will have nothing else than what they call pure imagination. Now air-plants ought not to fill the whole conservatory; other plants, I would modestly suggest, are worth cultivating, which send their roots pretty deep into the ground. I hate both poetry and wine without body. Look at Shakspeare, Bacon, and Milton; were these your pure imagination men? The least of them, whichever it was, carried a jewel of poetry about him worth all his tribe that came after. Did the two of them who wrote in verse build upon nothing? Did their predecessors? And, pray, whose daughter was the Muse they invoked? Why, Memory's. They stood among substantial men, and sang upon recorded actions. The plain of Scamander, the promontory of Sigæum, the palaces of Tros and Dardanus, the citadel in which the Fates sang mournfully under the image of Minerva, seem fitter places for the Muses to alight on, than artificial rockwork or than fairy rings. But your great favorite, I hear, is Spenser, who shines in allegory, and who, like an aerolite is dull and heavy when he descends to the ground.

Southey. He continues a great favorite with me still, although he must always lose a little as our youth declines. Spenser's is a spacious but somewhat low chamber, hung with rich tapestry on which the figures are mostly disproportioned, but some of the faces are lively and beautiful; the furniture is part creaking and worm-eaten, part fragrant with cedar and sandal-wood and aromatic gums and balsams; every table and mantelpiece and cabinet is covered with gorgeous vases, and birds, and dragons, and houses in the air.

Porson. There is scarcely a poet of the same eminence, whom I have found it so delightful to read in, or so tedious to read through. Give me Chaucer in preference. He slaps us on the shoulder, and makes us spring up while the dew is on the grass, and while the long shadows play about it in all quarters. We feel strong with the freshness round us, and we return with a keener appetite, having such a companion in our walk. Among the English poets, both on this side and the other side of Milton, I place him next to Shakspeare; but the word *next* must have nothing to do with the word *near*. I said before, that I do not estimate so highly as many do the mushrooms that sprang up in a ring under the great oak of Arden.

Southey. These authors deal in strong distillations for foggy minds that want excitement. In few places is there a great depth of sentiment, but everywhere vast exaggeration and insane display. I find the over-crammed curiosity-shop, with its incommodious appendages, some grotesquely rich, all disorderly and disconnected. Rather would I find, as you would, the well-proportioned hall, with its pillars of right dimensions at right distances; with its figures, some in high relief and some in lower; with its statues and its busts of glorious men and women, whom I recognize at first sight; and its tables of the rarest marbles and richest gems, inlaid in glowing porphyry, and supported by imperishable bronze. Without a pure simplicity of design, without a just subordination of characters, without a select choice of such personages as either have interested us or must by the power of association, without appropriate ornaments laid on solid materials, — no admirable poetry of the first order can exist.

Porson. Well, we cannot get all these things, and we will not cry for them. Leave me rather in the curiosity-shop than in the nursery. By your reference to the noble models of antiquity, it is evident that those poets most value the ancients who are certain to be among them. In our own earlier poets, as in the earlier Italian painters, we find many disproportions; but we discern the dawn of truth over the depths of expression. These were soon lost sight of, and every new-comer passed further from them. I like Pietro Perugino a thousand-fold better than Carlo Maratta, and Giotto a thousand-fold better than Carlo Dolce. On the same principle, the daybreak of Chaucer is pleasanter to me than the hot dazzling noon of Byron.

Southey. I am not confident that we ever speak quite correctly of those who differ from us essentially in taste, in opinion, or even in style. If we cordially wish to do it, we are apt to lay a restraint on ourselves, and to dissemble a part of our convictions.

Porson. An error seldom committed.

Southey. Sometimes, however. I, for example, did not expose in my criticisms half the blemishes I discovered in the style and structure of Byron's poetry, because I had infinitely more to object against the morals it disseminated; and what must have been acknowledged for earnestness in the greater question might have been mistaken for captiousness in the less. His partisans, no one of whom probably ever read Chaucer, would be indignant at your preference. They would wonder, but hardly with the same violence of emotion, that he was preferred to Shakspeare. Perhaps his countrymen in his own age, which rarely happens to literary men overshadowingly great, had glimpses of his merit. One would naturally think that a personage of Camden's gravity, and placed beyond the pale of poetry, might have spoken less contemptuously of some he lived among, in his admiration of Chaucer. He tells us both in prose and verse, by implication, how little he esteemed Shakspeare. Speaking of Chaucer, he says, "He, surpassing all others, without question, in wit, and leaving our smattering poetasters by many leagues behind him,

"'Jam monte potitus
Ridet anhelantem dura ad fastigia turbam.'"

Which he thus translates for the benefit of us students in poetry and criticism: —

"When once himself the steep top-hill had won,
At all the sort of them he laughed anon,
To see how they, the pitch thereof to gain,
Puffing and blowing do climbe up in vain."

Nevertheless we are indebted to Camden for preserving the best Latin verses, and indeed the only good ones, that had hitherto been written by any of our countrymen. They were written in an age when great minds were attracted by greater, and when tribute was paid where tribute was due, with loyalty and enthusiasm.

> "Drace! pererrati novit quem terminus orbis
> Quemque simul mundi vidit uterque polus.
> Si taceant homines, facient te sidera notum;
> Sol nescit comitis immemor esse sui."

Porson. A subaltern in the supplementary company of the Edinburgh sharpshooters much prefers the slender Italians, who fill their wallets with scraps from the doors of rich old houses. To compare them in rank and substance with those on whose bounty they feed is too silly for grave reprehension. But there are certain men who are driven by necessity to exhibit some sore absurdity: it is their only chance of obtaining a night's lodging in the memory.

Southey. Send the Ishmaelite back again to his desert: he has indeed no right to complain of you; for there are scarcely two men of letters at whom he has not cast a stone, although he met them far beyond the tents and the pasturage of his tribe: and leave those poets also, and return to consider attentively the one, much more original, on whom we began our discourse.

Porson. Thank you. I have lain in ditches ere now; but not willingly, nor to contemplate the moon, nor to gather celandine. I am reluctant to carry a lantern in quest of my man, and am but little contented to be told that I may find him at last, if I look long enough and far enough. One who exhibits no sign of life in the duration of a single poem may at once be given up to the undertaker.

Southey. It would be fairer in you to regard the aim and object of the poet when he tells you what it is, than to linger in those places where he appears to disadvantage.

Porson. My oil and vinegar are worth more than the winter cabbage you have set before me, and are ill spent upon it. In what volume of periodical criticism do you not find it stated that, the aim of an author being such or such, the only question is whether he has attained it? Now, instead of this being the only question to be solved, it is pretty nearly the one least worthy of attention. We are not to consider whether a foolish man has succeeded in a foolish undertaking: we are to consider whether his production is worth any thing, and why it is, or why it is not? Your cook, it appears, is disposed to fry me a pancake; but it is not his intention to supply me with lemon-juice and sugar. Pastiness and flatness are the qualities of a pancake, and thus far he has attained his aim; but if he means it for me, let him place the accessories on the table, lest what is insipid and clammy and (as housewives with great propriety call it) sad grow into duller accretion and inerter viscidity the more I masticate it. My good Mr. Southey, do not be offended at these homely similes. Socrates uses no other in the pages of the stately Plato; they are all, or nearly all, borrowed from the artisan and the trader. I have plenty of every sort at hand, but I always take the most applicable, quite indifferent to the smartness and glossiness of its trim. If you prefer one from another quarter, I would ask where is the advantage of drilling words for verses, when the knees of those verses are so weak that they cannot march from the parade?

Southey. Flatnesses are more apparent to us in our language than in another, especially than in Latin and Greek. Beside, we value things proportionally to the trouble they have given us in the acquisition. Hence, in some measure, the importance we assign to German poetry. The meaning of every word, with all its affinities and relations, pursued with anxiety and caught with difficulty, impresses the understanding, sinks deep into the memory, and carries with it more than a column of our own, in which equal thought is expended, and equal fancy is displayed. The Germans have among them many admirable poets; but if we had even greater, ours would seem smaller, both because there is less haziness about them, and because, as I said before, they would have given less exercise to the mind. He who has accumulated by a laborious life more than a sufficiency for its wants and comforts turns his attention to the matter gained, oftentimes without a speculation at the purposes to which he might apply it. The man who early in the day has overcome, by vigilance and restraint, the strong impulses of his blood toward intemperance falls not into it after, but stands composed and complacent upon the cool clear eminence, and hears within himself, amid the calm he has created, the tuneful pæan of a godlike victory. Yet he loves the Virtue more because he fought for her than because she crowned him. The scholar who has deducted from adolescence many hours of recreation, and, instead of indulging in it, has embarked in the depths of literature; he who has left his own land far behind him, and has carried off rich stores of Greek, — not only values it superlatively, as is just, but places all those who wrote in it too nearly on a level one with another, and the inferior of them above some of the best moderns.

Porson. Dignity of thought arose from the Athenian form of government, propriety of expression from the genius of the language, from the habitude of listening daily to the most elaborate orations and dramas, and of contemplating at all hours the exquisite works of art, invited to them by gods and heroes. These environed the aspiring young poet, and their chasteness allowed him no swerving.

Southey. Yet weakly children were born to Genius in Attica as elsewhere.

Porson. They were exposed and died. The Greek poets, like nightingales, sing "in shadiest covert hid;" you rarely catch a glimpse of the person unless at a funeral or a feast, or where the occasion is public. Mr. Wordsworth, on the contrary, strokes down his waistcoat, hems gently first, then hoarsely, then impatiently, rapidly, and loudly. You turn your eyes, and see more of the showman than of the show. I do not complain of this; I only make the remark.

Southey. I dislike such comparisons and similes. It would have been better had you said he stands forth in sharp outline, and is, as the moon was said to be, without an atmosphere.

Porson. Stop there. I discover more atmosphere than moon. You are talking like a poet; I must talk like a grammarian. And here I am reminded I found in his grammar but one pronoun, and that is the pronoun *I*. He can devise no grand character, and indeed no variety of smaller: his own image is reflected from floor to roof in every crystallization of the chilly cavern. He shakes us with no thunder of anger; he leads us into no labyrinth of love; we lament on the stormy shore no Lycidas of his; and even the Phillis who meets us at her cottage-gate is not Phillis the neat-handed. Byron has likewise been censured for egoism, and the censure is applicable to him nearly in the same degree. But so laughable a story was never told of Byron as the true and characteristical one related of your neighbor; who, being invited to read in company a novel of Scott's, and finding at the commencement a quotation from himself, totally forgot the novel, and recited his own poem from beginning to end, with many comments and more commendations. Yours are quite gratuitous; for it is reported of him that he never was heard to commend the poetry of any living author.

Southey. Because he is preparing to discharge the weighty debt he owes posterity. Instead of wasting his breath on extraneous praises, we never have been seated five minutes in his company before he regales us with those poems of his own, which he is the most apprehensive may have slipped from our memory; and he delivers them with such a summer murmur of fostering modulation as would perfectly delight you.

Porson. My horse is apt to shy when I hang him at any door where he catches the sound of a ballad; and I run out to seize bridle and mane, and grow the alerter at mounting.

Southey. Wordsworth has now turned from the ballad style to the philosophical.

Porson. The philosophical, I suspect, is antagonist to the poetical.

Southey. Surely never was there a spirit more philosophical than Shakspeare's.

Porson. True, but Shakspeare infused it into living forms adapted to its reception. He did not puff it out incessantly from his own person, bewildering you in the mazes of metaphysics, and swamping you in sententiousness. After all our argumentation, we merely estimate poets by their energy, and not extol them for a congeries of piece on piece, sounding of the hammer all day long, but obstinately unmalleable into unity and cohesion.

Southey. I cannot well gainsay it. But pray remember the subjects of that poetry in Burns and Scott, which you admire the most. What is martial must be the most soul-stirring.

Porson. Sure enough, Mr. Wordsworth's is neither martial nor mercurial. On all subjects of poetry, the soul should be agitated in one way or other. Now did he ever excite in you any strong emotion? He has had the best chance with me; for I have soon given way to him, and he has sung me asleep with his lullabies. It is in our dreams that things look brightest and fairest, and we have the least control over our affections.

Southey. You cannot but acknowledge that the poetry which is strong enough to support, as his does, a wide and high superstructure of morality is truly beneficial and admirable. I do not say that utility is the first aim of poetry: but I do say that good poetry is none the worse for being useful; and that his is good in many parts, and useful in nearly all.

Porson. An old woman who rocks a cradle in a chimney-corner may be more useful than the joyous girl who wafts my heart before her in the waltz, or holds it quivering in the bonds of harmony; but I happen to have no relish for the old woman, and am ready to dip my fork into the little well-garnished *agro dolce.* It is inhuman to quarrel with ladies and gentlemen who are easily contented; that is, if you will let them have their own way. It is inhuman to snatch a childish book from a child, for whom it is better than a wise one. If diffuseness is pardonable anywhere, we will pardon it in *Lyrical Ballads*, passing over the conceited silliness of the denomination; but Mr. Wordsworth has got into the same habit on whatever he writes. Whortleberries are neither the better nor the worse for extending the hard slenderness of their fibres, at random and riotingly, over their native wastes; we care not how much of such soil is covered with such insipidities: but we value that fruit more highly which requires some warmth to swell, and some science and skill to cultivate it. To descend from metaphor, that is the best poetry which, by its own powers, produces the greatest and most durable emotion on generous, well-informed, and elevated minds. It often happens that what belongs to the subject is attributed to the poet. Tenderness, melancholy, and other affections of the soul attract us toward him who represents them to us; and, while we hang upon his neck, we are ready to think him stronger than he is. No doubt, it is very natural that the wings of the Muse should seem to grow larger the nearer they come to the ground! Such is the effect, I presume, of our English atmosphere! But if Mr. Wordsworth should at any time become more popular, it will be owing in great measure to your authority and patronage; and I hope that, neither in health nor in sickness, he will forget his benefactor.

Southey. However that may be, it would be unbecoming and base in me to suppress an act of justice toward him, withholding my testimony in his behalf when he appeals to the tribunal of the public. The reader who can discover no good, or indeed no excellent, poetry in his manifold productions must have lost the finer part of his senses.

Porson. And he who fancies he has found it in all or in most of them is just as happy as if his senses were entire. A great portion of his compositions is not poetry, but only the plasma or matrix of poetry, which has something of the same color and material, but wants the brilliancy and solidity.

Southey. Acknowledge, at least, that what purifies the mind elevates it also; and that he does it.

Porson. Such a result may be effected at a small expenditure of the poetical faculty, and indeed without any. But I do not say that he has none, or that he has little: I only say, and I stake my credit on it, that what he has is not of the higher order. This is proved beyond all controversy by the effect it produces. The effect of the higher poetry is excitement; the effect of the inferior is composure. I lay down a general principle, and I leave to others the application of it, to-day, to-morrow, and in time to come. Little would it benefit me or you to take a side; and still less to let the inanimate raise animosity in us. There are partisans in favor of a poet, and oppositionists against him, just as there are in regard to candidates for a seat in Parliament; and the vociferations of the critics and of the populace are equally loud, equally inconsiderate and insane. The unknown candidate and the unread poet has alike a mob at his heels, ready to swear and fight for him. The generosity which the political mob shows in one instance, the critical mob shows in the other: when a man has been fairly knocked down, it raises him on the knee, and cheers him as cordially as it would the most triumphant. Let similar scenes be rather our amusement than our business; let us wave our hats, and walk on without a *favor* in them.

Southey. Be it our business, and not for one day, but for life, "to raise up them that fall" by undue violence. The beauties of Wordsworth are not to be looked for among the majestic ruins and under the glowing skies of Greece: we must find them out, like primroses, amid dry thickets, rank grass, and withered leaves. But there they are; and there are tufts and clusters of them. There may be a chilliness in the air about them, there may be a faintness, a sickliness, a poverty in the scent; but I am sorry and indignant to see them trampled on.

Porson. He who tramples on rocks is in danger of breaking his shins; and he who tramples on sand or sawdust loses his labor. Between us, we may keep up Mr. Wordsworth in his right position. If we set any thing on an uneven basis, it is liable to fall off, and none the less liable for the thing being high and weighty.

Southey. The axiom is sound.

Porson. Cleave it in two, and present the first half to Mr. Wordsworth. Let every man have his due: divide the mess fairly; not according to the voracity of the laborer, but according to the work. And (God love you!) never let old women poke me with their knitting-pins, if I recommend them, in consideration of their hobbling and wheezing, to creep quietly on by the level side of Mr. Wordsworth's lead-mines, slate-quarries, and tarns, leaving me to scramble as I can among the Alpine inequalities of Milton and of Shakspeare. Come now; in all the time we have been walking together at the side of the lean herd you are driving to market,

"Can you make it appear
The dog Porson has ta'en the wrong sow by the ear?"

Southey. It is easier to show that he has bitten it through, and made it unfit for curing. He may expect to be pelted for it.

Porson. In cutting up a honeycomb, we are sure to bring flies and wasps about us; but my slipper is enough to crush fifty at a time, if a flap of the glove fails to frighten them off. The honeycomb must be cut up, to separate the palatable from the unpalatable; the hive we will restore to the cottager; the honey we will put in a cool place for those it may agree with; and the wax we will attempt to purify, rendering it the material of a clear and steady light to our readers. Well! I have rinsed my mouth of the poetry. This is about the time I take my ptisan. Be so kind, Mr. Southey, as to give me that bottle which you will find under the bed. Yes, yes; that is it; there is no mistake.

Southey. It smells like brandy.

Porson (*drinks twice*). I suspect you may be in the right, Mr. Southey. Let me try it against the palate once more: just one small half-glass. Ah! my hand shakes sadly. I am afraid it was a bumper. Really now, I do think, Mr. Southey, you guessed the right reading. I have scarcely a doubt left upon my mind. But in a fever, or barely off it, the mouth is wofully out of taste. If ever your hand shakes, take my word for it, this is the only remedy. The ptisan has done me good already. Albertus Magnus knew most about these matters. I hate the houses, Mr. Southey, where it is as easy to find the way out as the way in. Curse upon the architect who contrives them!

Southey. Your friends will be happy to hear from me that you never have been in better spirits, or more vivacious and prompt in conversation.

Porson. Tell them that Silenus can still bridle and mount an ass, and guide him gloriously. Come and visit me when I am well again; and I promise you the bottles shall diminish and the lights increase before we part.

III. BISHOP BURNET AND HUMPHREY HARDCASTLE.

Hardcastle. I am curious, my lord bishop, to hear somewhat about the flight and escape of my namesake and uncle, Sir Humphrey Hardcastle; who was a free-spoken man, witty, choleric, and hospitable, and who cannot have been altogether an alien from the researches of your lordship into the history of the two late reigns.

Burnet. Why, Mr. Hardcastle, I do well remember the story of that knight, albeit his manners and morals were such as did entertain me little in his favor. For he hunted and drank and fornicated, and (some do aver) swore, which, however, mark me, I do not deliver from my own knowledge, nor from any written and grave document. I the more wonder at him, since he had lived among the Roundheads, as they were contemptuously called; and the minister of his parish was Ezekiel Stedman, a Puritan of no ill-repute. Howbeit he was ensnared by his worldly-mindedness, and fell into evil courses. The Lord, who permitted him a long while to wallow in this mire, caught him by the heel, so to say, as he was coming out, and threw him into great peril in another way. For although he had mended his life, and had espoused Margaret Pouncey, whose mother was a Touchet, — two staid women, — yet did he truly in a boozing-bout, such as some country gentlemen I could mention do hold after dinner, say of the duke, "James, — a murrain on him! — is a Papist."

Now among his servants was one Will Taunton, a sallow, shining-faced knave, sweaty with impudence. I do remember to have seen the said Taunton in the pillory, for some prominent part he had enacted under the doctor, Titus Oates; and a country wench, as I suppose her to have been from her apparel and speech, said unto me, plucking my sleeve, "Look, parson, Will's forehead is like a rank mushroom in a rainy morning; and yet, I warrant you, they show it forsooth as the cleanest and honestest part about him."

To continue: Will went straightway and communicated the words of his master to Nicolas Shottery, the duke's valet. Nick gave unto him a shilling, having first spatten thereon, as he (according to his superstition) said, for luck. The duke ordered to be counted out unto him eight shillings more, together with a rosary, the which, as he was afraid of wearing it (for he had not lost all grace), he sold at Richmond for two groats. He was missed in the family, and his roguery was scented. On which, nothing was foolisher, improperer, or unreasonabler than the desperate push and strain Charles made, put upon it by his brother James, to catch your uncle Hum Hardcastle. Hum had his eye upon him, slipped the noose, and was over into the Low Countries.

Abraham Cowley, one of your Pindaric lyrists, a great stickler for the measures of the First Charles, was posted after him. But he played the said Abraham a scurvy trick; seizing him by his fine flowing curls, on which he prided himself mightily, like another Absalom; cuffing him, and, some do say, kicking him, in such dishonest wise as I care not to mention, to his, the said Abraham's, great incommodity and confusion. It is agreed on all hands that he handled him very roughly, sending him back to his master with a flea in his ear, who gave him but cold comfort, and told him it would be an ill compliment to ask him to be seated.

"Phil White," added he, "may serve you, Cowley. You need not look back, man, nor spread your fingers like a fig-leaf on the place. Phil does not, like Dan Holroyd of Harwick, carry a bottle of peppered brine in his pocket; he is a clever, apposite, upright little prig. I have often had him under my eye close enough, and I promise he may safely be trusted on the blind side of you."

Then, after these aggravating and childish words, turning to the duke, as Abraham was leaving the presence, he is reported to have said, I hope untruly: "But, damn it, brother! the jest would have been heightened if we could have hanged the knave," meaning not indeed his messenger, but the above-cited Hum Hardcastle. And on James shaking his head, sighing, and muttering his doubt of the king's sincerity, and his vexation at so bitter a disappointment, "Oddsfish! Jim," said his Majesty, "the motion was Hum's own! I gave him no jog, upon my credit! His own choler did it, a rogue! and he would not have waited to be invested with the order, if I had pressed him ever so civilly. I will oblige you another time in any thing, but we can hang only those we can get at."

It would appear that there was a sore and rankling grudge between them of long standing, and that there had been divers flings and flouts backward and forward, on this side the water, on the score of their mistress, Poesy; whose favors to them both, if a man may judge from the upshot, left no such a mighty matter for heart-burnings and ill blood.

This reception had such a stress and stir upon the bile and spirits of Doctor Spratt's friend (for such he was, even while writing about his mistresses), that he wooed his Pegasus another way, and rid gentlier. It fairly untuned him for Chloes and fantastical things of all sorts, set him upon another guess scent, gave him ever afterward a soberer and staider demeanor, and turned his mind to contentment.

Hardcastle. The pleasure I have taken in the narration of your lordship is for the greater part independent of what concerns my family. We have only a few songs of our uncle; and these too would have been lost, if the old coachman had not taught them to his grandson, still in my service.

They are such as I forbid him to sing in our house, but connive at him doing it when he is in others'; particularly at the inns, where they always obtain me the best wine and most gladsome attendance. In fact, I have ever found that, when my horses came out of a stable where he had been singing, they neighed the louder, and trotted the faster, and made a prouder display of their oats.

Burnet. I remember one of them, from its being more reasonable than the invocations of a lover usually are. Either they talk of tears, which they ought to be ashamed of as men and Christians, or of death, when the doctor has told them no such thing; or they run wild among the worst imps and devils of the Gentiles, for in truth they are no better, whatever forms they assumed, — Nymphs or Graces or what not.

Hardcastle. Pray, my lord bishop, if there is no impropriety in asking it, might I request a copy of those verses?

Burnet. Truly, sir, I keep none of such a girl's-eye sampler. I will attempt to recollect the words, which, I own it, pleased me by their manfulness, as demonstrating that your Uncle Hum, though a loosish man and slippery in foul proclivities, was stout and resolute with the sluts in his wiser moments, calling them what they ought to be called at the first word.

"Listen, mad girl! since giving ear
May save the eyes hard work:
Tender is he who holds you dear,
But proud as pope or Turk."

Now Hum hated paganism and iniquity; and nothing could stir him from his church, though he attended it but seldom. He proceeds thus: —

"Some have been seen, whom people thought
Much prettier girls than you," —

Observe, he will be reasonable, and bring the creature to her senses if he can: —

"Setting a lover's tears at nought,
Like any other dew;

"And some too have been heard to swear,
While with wet lids they stood,
No man alive was worth a tear:
They never wept — nor wou'd."

Resolute! ay! False creatures; he sounded them, even the deepest. There is something about these wantons black as hell, and they cannot help showing it.

Hardcastle. I thank your lordship, as much for your reflections as for my uncle's poetry.

Burnet. I wish he had left behind him the experience he must have paid dear for, that it might serve to admonish the sprigs and sparks (as they are called) of our unhappy times, and purify the pestilence they are breathing. Formerly, we know from Holy Writ, the devils ran out of men into swine, and pushed down in those fit bodies to the sea. It now appears that they were still snifting and hankering after their old quarters; and we find them rushing again into men, only the stronger and hungrier, the ungovernabler and uncleanlier, for so much salt-water bathing.

Hardcastle. I am afraid, my lord bishop, you have too much reason for this severe remark. My uncle, I knew, was somewhat of a libertine; but I never had heard before that he was such a poet, and could hardly have imagined that he approached near enough to Mr. Cowley for jealousy or competition.

Burnet. Indeed, they who discoursed on such matters were of the same opinion, excepting some few, who see nothing before them and every thing behind. These declared that Hum would overtop Abraham, if he could only drink rather less, think rather more, and feel rather rightlier; that he had great spunk and spirit, and that not a fan was left upon a lap when any one sang his airs. Lucretius tells us that there is a plant on Helicon so pestiferous that it kills by the odor of its flowers. It appears that these flowers are now collected by our young women for their sweet-pots, and that the plant itself is naturalized among us, and blossoming in every parlor window. Poets, like ministers of state, have their parties, and it is difficult to get at truth upon questions not capable of demonstration nor founded on matter of fact. To take any trouble about them is an unwise thing. It is like mounting a wall covered with broken glass: you cut your fingers before you reach the top, and you only discover at last that it is, within a span or two, of equal height on both sides. To sit as an arbitrator between two contending poets, I should consider just as foolish as to take the same position and office between two game-cocks, if it were at the same time as wicked. I say as wicked; for I am firmly of opinion that those things are the foolishest which are the most immoral. The greatest of stakes, mundanely speaking, is the stake of reputation: hence he who hazards the most of it against a viler object is the most irrational and insane. I do not understand rightly in what the greatness of your poets, and such like, may be certified to rest. Who would have imagined that the youth who was carried to his long home the other day — I mean my Lord Rochester's reputed child, Mr. George Nelly — was for several seasons a great poet? Yet I remember the time when he was so famous a one that he ran after Mr. Milton up Snow-hill, as the old gentleman was leaning on his daughter's arm from the Poultry, and, treading down the heel of his shoe, called him a rogue and a liar; while another poet sprang out, clapping his hands and crying, "Bravely done, by Beelzebub! the young cock spurs the blind buzzard gallantly!" On a scrivener representing to Mr. George the respectable character of Mr. Milton, and the probability that at some future time he might be considered as among our geniuses, and such as would reflect a certain portion of credit on his ward, and asking him withal why he appeared to him a rogue and a liar, he replied, "I have proofs known to few: I possess a sort of drama by him, entitled *Comus*, which was composed for the entertainment of Lord Pembroke, who held an appointment under the king; and this John hath since changed sides, and written in defence of the Commonwealth."

Mr. George began with satirizing his father's friends, and confounding the better part of them with all the hirelings and nuisances of the age; with all the scavengers of lust, and all the link-boys of literature; with Newgate solicitors, the patrons of adulterers and forgers, who, in the long vacation, turn a penny by puffing a ballad, and are promised a shilling in silver for their own benefit, on crying down a religious tract. He soon became reconciled to them, and they raised him upon their shoulders above the heads of the wittiest and the wisest. This served a whole winter. Afterward, whenever he wrote a bad poem, he supported his sinking fame by some signal act of profligacy: an elegy by a seduction, a heroic by an adultery, a tragedy by a divorce. On the remark of a learned man, that irregularity is no indication of genius, he began to lose ground rapidly, when on a sudden he cried out at the Haymarket, *There is no God!* It was then surmised more generally and more gravely that there was something in him, and he stood upon his legs almost to the last. Say what you will, once whispered a friend of mine, there are things in him strong as poison and original as sin. Doubts, however, were entertained by some, on more mature reflection, whether he earned all his reputation by his aphorism; for soon afterward he declared at the Cockpit that he had purchased a large assortment of cutlasses and pistols, and that, as he was practising the use of them from morning to night, it would be imprudent in persons who were without them either to laugh or to boggle at the Dutch vocabulary with which he had enriched our language. In fact, he had invented new rhymes in profusion, by such words as trackschuyt, Wageninghen, Skiermonikoog, Bergen-op-Zoom, and whatever is appertaining to the market-places of fish, flesh, fowl, flowers, and legumes, not to omit the dockyards and barracks and ginshops, with various kinds of essences and drugs.

Now, Mr. Hardcastle, I would not censure this: the idea is novel, and does no harm; but why should a man push his neck into a halter to sustain a catch or glee?

Having had some concern in bringing his reputed father to a sense of penitence for his offences, I waited on the youth likewise in a former illness, not without hope of leading him ultimately to a better way of thinking. I had hesitated too long: I found him far advanced in his convalescence. My arguments are not worth repeating. He replied thus: "I change my mistresses as Tom Southern his shirt, from economy. I cannot afford to keep few; and I am determined not to be forgotten till I am vastly richer. But I assure you, Doctor Burnet, for your comfort, that if you imagine I am led astray by lasciviousness, as you call it, and lust, you are quite as much mistaken as if you called a book of arithmetic a bawdy book. I calculate on every kiss I give, modest or immodest, on lip or paper. I ask myself one question only: What will it bring me?" On my marvelling and raising up my hands, "You churchmen," he added with a laugh, "are too hot in all your quarters for the calm and steady contemplation of this high mystery."

He spake thus loosely, Mr. Hardcastle, and I confess I was disconcerted and took my leave of him. If I gave him any offence at all, it could only be when he said, "I should be sorry to die before I had written my life;" and I replied, "Rather say, before you have mended it."

"But, doctor," continued he, "the work I propose may bring me a hundred pounds." Whereunto I rejoined, "That which I, young gentleman, suggest in preference will be worth much more to you."

At last he is removed from among the living. Let us hope the best; to wit, that the mercies which have begun with man's forgetfulness will be crowned with God's forgiveness.

Hardcastle. I perceive, my lord bishop, that writers of perishable fame may leave behind them something worth collecting. Represented to us by historians like your lordship, we survey a light character as a film in agate, and a noxious one as a toad in marble.

Burnet. How near together, Mr. Hardcastle, are things which appear to us the most remote and opposite! — how near is death to life, and vanity to glory! How deceived are we, if our expressions are any proofs of it, in what we might deem the very matters most subject to our senses! The haze above our heads we call the heavens, and the thinnest of the air the firmament.

IV. THE ABBÉ DELILLE AND WALTER LANDOR.

The Abbé Delille was the happiest of creatures, when he could weep over the charms of innocence and the country in some crowded and fashionable circle at Paris. We embraced most pathetically on our first meeting there, as if the one were condemned to quit the earth, the other to live upon it.

Delille. You are reported to have said that descriptive poetry has all the merits of a handkerchief that smells of roses?

Landor. This, if I said it, is among the things which are neither false enough nor true enough to be displeasing. But the Abbé Delille has merits of his own. To translate Milton well is more laudable than originality in trifling matters; just as to transport an obelisk from Egypt, and to erect it in one of the squares, must be considered a greater labor than to build a new milliner's shop.

Delille. Milton is indeed extremely difficult to translate; for, however noble and majestic, he is sometimes heavy, and often rough and unequal.

Landor. Dear Abbé! porphyry is heavy, gold is heavier; Ossa and Olympus are rough and unequal; the steppes of Tartary, though high, are of uniform elevation: there is not a rock, nor a birch, nor a cytisus, nor an arbutus upon them great enough to shelter a new-dropped lamb. Level the Alps one with another, and where is their sublimity? Raise up the vale of Tempe to the downs above, and where are those sylvan creeks and harbors in which the imagination watches while the soul reposes; those recesses in which the gods partook the weaknesses of mortals, and mortals the enjoyments of the gods?

You have treated our poet with courtesy and distinction: in your trimmed and measured dress, he might be taken for a Frenchman. Do not think me flattering. You have conducted Eve from Paradise to Paris, and she really looks prettier and smarter than before she tripped. With what elegance she rises from a most awful dream! You represent her (I repeat your expression) as springing up *en sursaut*, as if you had caught her asleep and tickled the young creature on that sofa.

Homer and Virgil have been excelled in sublimity by Shakspeare and Milton, as the Caucasus and Atlas of the old world by the Andes and Teneriffe of the new; but you would embellish them all.

Delille. I owe to Voltaire my first sentiment of admiration for Milton and Shakspeare.

Landor. He stuck to them as a woodpecker to an old forest-tree, only for the purpose of picking out what was rotten: he has made the holes deeper than he found them, and, after all his cries and chatter, has brought home but scanty sustenance to his starveling nest.

Delille. Voltaire is not always light, nor deficient in fire.

Landor. Even smoke hath solid parts, and takes fire sometimes.

Delille. You must acknowledge that there are fine verses in his tragedies.

Landor. Whenever such is the first observation, be assured, M. l'Abbé, that the poem, if heroic or dramatic, is bad. Should a work of this kind be excellent, we say, "How admirably the characters are sustained! What delicacy of discrimination! There is nothing to be taken away or altered without an injury to the part or to the whole." We may afterward descend on the versification. In poetry, there is a greater difference between the good and the excellent than there is between the bad and the good. Poetry has no golden mean: mediocrity here is of another metal, which Voltaire however had skill enough to encrust and polish. In the least wretched of his tragedies, whatever is tolerable is Shakspeare's; but, gracious Heaven! how deteriorated! When he pretends to extol a poet he chooses some defective part, and renders it more so whenever he translates it. I will repeat a few verses from Metastasio in support of my assertion. Metastasio was both a better critic and a better poet, although of the second order in each quality; his tyrants are less philosophical, and his chambermaids less dogmatic. Voltaire was, however, a man of abilities, and author of many passable epigrams, beside those which are contained in his tragedies and heroics; yet it must be confessed that, like your Parisian lackeys, they are usually the smartest when out of place.

Delille. What you call epigram gives life and spirit to grave works, and seems principally wanted to relieve a long poem. I do not see why what pleases us in a star should not please us in a constellation. The coarser bread is that of the larger loaf; we should therefore put into it more salt and leaven.

I believe you have no adequate translation of the *Henriade.* I doubt whether I myself have sufficient mastery over the English language to render it worthily.

Landor. Is it possible to doubt of your powers? May not the commencement be somewhat like this?

"I sing the hero, vanquisher
Of France, and Mayenne too,

The king of all his subjects,
And father of no few;
One never out-manœuvred
At rapier or intrigue,
Who parried off the Spaniard
And fairly bit the League.
Descend from heaven's top-gallery,
Descend, O Truth august!
And sprinkle o'er my writing
Thy pink and scented dust."

Delille, *Ah, çà!* That last thought is a bright one indeed! Voltaire would have emptied his snuff-box to replenish it with that fine powder. But — pardon! Our language has certain shades which none but a Frenchman can seize. There are here a few points of difference in the sentiment. You have indeed abundantly compensated for them, by the delicate allusion to our poet's theatre. But — but — *top-gallery!* — Ah Mr. Landor! even Homer would have failed: he would indeed. Our spirit, our *finesse*, our delicacy, are peculiarly ours.

Landor. I will never try again any thing so arduous.

Delille. Epigram and versification are the main secrets of French poetry; to which must be added an exactness of thought and a brevity of expression, such for instance as we admire in Boileau. But you promised me something of Metastasio.

Landor. I will repeat the lines, with Voltaire's observations.

The King of Parthia is brought in chains before the Emperor Hadrian, and has leisure for the following paraphrase, by which he would signify that his ruin itself shall be subservient to his revenge: —

Sprezza il furor del vento
Robusta quercia, avvezza
Di cento verni e cento
Le ingiurie a tolerar.
E se pur cadde al suolo,
Spiega per l'onde il volo,
E con quel vento istesso
Va contrastando il mar.

Con quel vento istesso! it must make haste then. Voltaire had forgotten the art of concealing his insincerity, when he praised as a *sublime air* the worst and most far-fetched thought in all the operas of Metastasio. He could read Italian poetry; he could write French: we have seen how he judged of the least familiar, let us now inquire how he judges of the most. He considers, then, the following lines in *Mithridate* as a model of perfection: —

J' ai sçu par une longue et pénible industrie
Des plus mortels venins prévenir la furie.
Ah! qu'il m'e*û*t mie*u*x val*u*, pl*u*s sage o*u* pl*u*s he*ur*e*u*x,
Et repoussant les traits d'un amour dangereux,
Ne pas laisser remplir d'ardeurs empoisonnées
Un cœur déjà glacé par *le froid des années.*

Alas! the cold of his years, in comparison with the cold of his wit, is but as a flake of snow to a mass of frozen mercury.

Delille. There often are quickness and spirit in the criticisms of Voltaire: but these, I acknowledge, do not constitute a good critic, although a good critic will not have been such without them. His versatility and variety are more remarkable than his correctness. On subjects where religion was not concerned, he was more accurate and dispassionate.

Landor. The physical world seemed a vast thing to him, for it must be a vast thing to contain Paris. He could not imagine that the earth had ever been covered by the sea, but that the shells on mountains were tossed there by Nature in her hours of idleness, to excite, no doubt, the curiosity of English travellers. Never did it once occur to him that changes are taking place eternally in every particle of our solar system, and of other solar systems far remote from ours; never did it occur to him that the ocean and the world within it are less in the hand of God than a bowl of milk with a morsel of bread within it are in a child's, where the one is soon dissolved and dislocates the other. But his taste in high poetry is no better than his judgment in high philosophy. Among the number of his futile and rash remarks, he declares that nothing in Homer is equivalent to Hesiod's description of Pandora. The homely and somewhat dull poem of Hesiod is indeed to a certain degree enlivened by it. But if Voltaire could have read a sentence of Greek, even without understanding one word, the music of those verses in the Odyssea, imitated so well by Lucretius,* on the habitations of the gods, and of those others where the mother of Ulysses* tells him the cause of her decease, would have checked him in the temerity of his decision. Nothing can excel the harmony of these passages, and the poetry they contain is equally perfect. How contemptible then is that critic, and how greatly more that poet, who prefers an indifferent piece of satire not only to these, but to the parting of Hector and Andromache and to the interview of Priam and Achilles!

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* Odys. vi. v. 42.

Delille. Acknowledge at least that in tales and in history he has done something.

Landor. Yes, he has united them very dexterously. In the lighter touches of irony and derision he excels Rabelais and rivals Molière; but in that which requires vigor of conception, and there is a kind which does require it, he falls short of Cervantes and Swift. You have other historians not only more faithful, but as powerful in style and as profound in thought. I place him barely on a level with Robertson, although in composition he may have an advantage over him; nor in disquisition is he comparable to Gibbon, whose manner, which many have censured, I think in general well suited to the work. In the *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* there is too much to sadden and disgust: a smile in such a narrative on some occasions is far from unacceptable; if it should be succeeded by a sneer, it is not the sneer of bitterness which falls not on debility, nor of triumph which accords not with contempt. The colors, it is true, are gorgeous, like those of the setting sun; and such were wanted. The style is much swayed by the sentiment. Would that which is proper for the historian of Fabius and Scipio, of Hannibal and Pyrrhus, be proper, too, for Augustulus and the popes? Gibbon could be grave when an emperor like Julian commanded it; but could he, or could any one, on rising from the narration of a Greek historian, who has described how an empress played "the royal game of goose"?

Delille. Gibbon, one would imagine, was a mixed production of two different races in Africa, and borrowed the moral features from the one, the physical from the other. The Kabobiguas have no worship, sacrifice, ceremonies, or priests; and the Housouanas have a nose which projects little more than five or six lines; half the face seems to be forehead. This, however, is no reply to your observations on his style. Accordant it may be indeed with the corruption of government and morals it describes; but is it not accordant likewise with the corruption of language at the time?

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* Odys. xi. v. 197.

Landor. I am afraid I should myself be guilty of another great fault attributed to him, that is digression, if I entered into the inquiry with the minuteness and to the extent you might demand. It must be confessed that, in his voluminous work, thirty (or perhaps more) instances of Frenchified or Latinized phraseology may be detected; and, what is worse, sometimes a puerility, contrasting violently with his gravity and pomp, intrudes upon us. His "golden tomb" of the silkworm is worse even than the Alps of Tacitus "faithful to the snow."

Delille. You will not, then, insist on his superiority over Voltaire in prose.

Landor. Certainly not: no writer is, where eloquence is uncalled for. Gibbon is habituated to a scholastic tone and strut on all occasions, pacing up and down the unventilated school of rhetoric with a measured and heavy step: Voltaire, on the contrary, is easy and animated, vigorous and supple; there is everywhere nerve enough, and nowhere a superfluity of flesh. His language is always perspicuous, which cannot be said of Gibbon's, and which is the first requisite of style. We will return to him in his criticisms, where he is seldom wrong while he treats on prose. But when he calls the French poetry strong and energetic, he shows himself insensible that the nature both of the language and of the metre prohibits it: when he calls the Italian weak and effeminate and unfit for action, he overlooks his inconsistency in remarking that "we respect Homer, but read Tasso." In his criticisms on poetry, I confess to you that, if you will allow me to deliver my opinion in the words of Chaucer,

"He hath a voice as weak as hath a *gote*."

No continental poet is less weak and effeminate than Chiabrera; whose works, I apprehend, Voltaire was just as incapable of appreciating as Homer's. Did he ever hear of Filicaja? — rich in thought as Pindar himself, and, on one occasion, more enthusiastic.

Delille. Enthusiastic as Pindar! Ah, M. Landor!

Landor. Abbé, I said *more* enthusiastic; for in criticism I love correctness. We have lost the greater and (some believe) the better part of Pindar's poetry: what remains is more distinguished for an exquisite selection of topics than for enthusiasm. There is a grandeur of soul which never leaves him, even in domestic scenes; and his genius does not rise on points or peaks of sublimity, but pervades the subject with a vigorous and easy motion, such as the poets attribute to the herald of the gods. He is remarkable for the rich economy of his ideas and the temperate austerity of his judgment; and he never says more than what is proper, nor otherwise than what is best.

I remember an observation of yours, that "the dithyrambic is almost entirely lost to the moderns, whose language is still less adapted to it than the Latin." * On the contrary, *all* the modern languages, with the sole exception of yours, are much better adapted to the dithyrambic than that is.

The Baron de Couture, in his notes on Lucretius, is enamoured of his native tongue, although less desperately than Henri Étienne, who calls it "the best of all tongues possible," — not existing or extinct, but within the gift of the Divinity. The more judicious lover thus expresses his admiration: "If it were permitted me, without offending any one, to say a few words to the advantage of our language, it appears to me that we may find in it all the ease, the polish, and the majesty of the Roman. To reproach it with its poverty is an outrage. Do not let us cast upon it our own defects: the sterility is in our thoughts. If we do but think, our language will furnish us with expressions. Perhaps I may be a little too partial to it."

Delille. Not at all! not at all!

Landor. He proceeds in acknowledging that he may be rather so in placing it with the Latin, to which, beyond all other of its excellences, it is unquestionably the rival (he says) in poetry. His next observation is that, if the Latin had the constraint of measure and of rhyme to vanquish, he doubts whether it ever would attain the charm of the French.

Delille. Very reasonably: I doubt it too; or, rather, I am certain it would not.

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* Se *prête* moins à la sublimité de l'enthousiasme.

Landor. If an organ were forced to imitate a ring of bells, I doubt whether the ring of bells would not succeed the best. He might have added, if the Romans had been obliged to split their heroic verses down the back like broiled mackerel, he doubts whether they would have been better than yours. But your language has a greater quantity of inharmonious sounds, and a smaller of distinct words for rhyme, than any other that employs it. Let a German, a Swede, a Russian, read to you a few pages of his poetry, and this will be evident. Many of the rhymes, indeed a great proportion of them, are formed by the termination of the tenses. Now surely no good writer would wish two similar tenses at equal distances. Talma, in remarking to me that a French actor has difficulties to surmount which an English has not, began with pointing out the necessity he lies under of breaking the joints and claws of every verse, as of pigeons for a pie, and of pronouncing it as if it were none at all; thus undoing what the writer had taken the greater part of his pains to accomplish.

The business of the higher poetry is to chasten and elevate the mind by exciting the better passions, and to impress on it lessons of terror and of pity by exhibiting the self-chastisement of the worse. There should be as much of passion as is possible, with as much of reason as is consistent with it. How admirable is the union of these in the ode of Filicaja to Sobieski!

Delille. Do you really then prefer this Italian to Boileau? His ode to the king is fine.

Landor. There is nearly as much difference between his ode and the Italian, as between Sobieski and Louis; nearly as much as between the liberation of Europe and the conflagration of the Palatinate. Give me the volume, if that in your hand is it.*

"The *high* wisdom of a *young* hero is not the *tardy* fruit of *slow old* age."

Dear Abbé, can you ever have read this commencement, and call the author a man of genius or taste?

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* Our popular critics have never suspected that Boileau is deficient in correctness of thought or expression. It is chiefly for the edification of those who recommend him as a model that this dialogue was written. A grub, if hooked with dexterity, may catch a tunny.

. . . Ma muse tremblante
Fuit d'un si *grand fardeau* la charge *trop pesante.*

Vulgarity in the metaphor and redundance in the expression; and look! it occurs again at the conclusion. Addison tells you that he does, what he gives no sign of doing, that he

"*Bridles* in his struggling Muse with pain."

But it is better to turn a Muse into a mare than into a mule or ass, which Boileau does; and Addison has redeemed the wretchedness of his poetry by the suavity and humor of his prose.

Et tandis que ton bras des peuples *redouté*
Va le foudre à la main rétablir l'équité.

I always fancied that the *foudre* is rather a destroyer than an establisher. But why was the arm of Louis feared by the nations, if it was armed only to establish equity? The arm with the thunderbolt in the hand is worse than tautology.

Let us turn to his Satires.

Satire I.

Et puis, comment percer *cette foule effroyable*
De rimeurs affamés . . . *dont le nombre l'acable* . . .
Un lit et deux placets composaient tout son bien;
Ou, pour en mieux parler, Saint-Amant n'avait rien.

It would puzzle me to divine in what this *mieux parler* consists. There never was a verse more idle than this better-spoken one, or what would incur more ridicule in any notoriously bad writer. The bed and the *deux placets* show the extremes of Saint-Amant's poverty, without the least expenditure of wit or fancy to light up the chamber; any other piece of worthless furniture might have been added. This, however, did not suit the rhyme, Boileau's goddess of Necessity. He therefore ridicules the man for not having what he had just before ridiculed him for having.

Satire II.

Pour qui tient Apollon tous ses trésors ouverts,
Et qui sçait à quel coin se marquent les bons vers?

Behold the art of sinking!

Satire III.

Nothing can be more flat and farther out of character than the last lines from a person who professes, just before, an utter indifference to the pleasures of the table.

Satire IV.

> Tout hérissé de grec, tout bouffi d'arrogance.

All this, excepting the last word, is in another place. The idea of *hérissé de grec* arose, I presume, from the sharp and slender forms of the Greek letters as we see them printed. A line of Greek appeared to Boileau like a hedge of aloes.

> La même erreur les fait errer diversement.

A contradiction the more apparent, as he had mentioned the hundred roads in which the travellers wandered, some to the right, some to the left. He has ridiculed the errors into which men have run from the imperfection of their reason; a great folly! He now gravely rails at reason itself; a greater!

> Que si d'un sort fâcheux la maligne inconstance.

The inconstancy of a *sort fâcheux* was never before complained of, still less called malignant.

> Enfin un médecin fort expert en son art
> Le guérit . . . par adresse ou plutôt par hasard.

It is quite unimportant to the story, if not to the verse, whether the physician cured the man by skill or chance; but to say that he was *fort expert en son art*, and subjoin that he effected his cure *plutôt par hasard*, proves that the poet must have taken his expressions altogether at hazard.

Satire V.

> *On fait cas* d'un coursier qui, fier . . . et plein de cœur . . .

Does what?—

> Fait paraître en courant sa bouillante vigueur.

This is natural enough, and could not well be otherwise;

but what think you of a horse that *jamais ne se lasse?* Do not be surprised: he becomes just like another, and

dans la carrière
S'est couvert *mille fois* . . . d'une *noble* poussière.

Satire VI.

A man who reasons must be aware how silly it is to write an angry satire on cats: yet the first thing that provokes the complaints of Boileau against Paris is the noise of these animals, and their dangerous conspiracies, in league with the rats, against his repose. Such a confederation is about as rational and natural, and must end in the same manner as the alliance of the crowned crimps against your country, in the name of the holy and undivided Trinity. He then calls this disturbance the least of his misfortunes, and attacks the cocks, which of course are a plague to Paris. Yet neither the cocks, nor the blacksmith who falls next under his displeasure, are, if we may judge from the outcry he makes, so grievous an evil to him as the former licentious disturbers of his peace.

Les voleurs à l'instant s'emparent de la ville.
Le bois *le plus funeste* et le moins fréquenté
Est, au prix de Paris, un lieu de sûreté.

Exaggeration may be carried to any height where there is wit, but rolls down like a load of gravel where there is none.

Malheur donc à celui qu'une affaire imprévue
Engage un peu trop tard au détour d'une rue!

He does not seem conscious that the praises he has been lavishing on Louis are worth nothing, if there is a foundation for this complaint. Thieves are not subjects for satire; but those are whose capitals are crowded with them.

Il faudrait, dans l'enclos d'un vaste logement,
Avoir loin de la rue un autre appartement.

This is curious; for it demonstrates to us that there certainly must have been a time when it was considered, or offered, as wit, satire, or moral.

Delille. You are very fastidious for one so little advanced in years.

Landor. I was more fastidious when I was younger, and I could detect a fallacy in composition as readily as now. I had been accustomed to none but the best models. I had read Pindar and the great tragedians more than once before I had read half the plays of Shakspeare. My prejudices in favor of ancient literature began to wear away on *Paradise Lost;* and even the great hexameter sounded to me tinkling when I had recited aloud in my solitary walks on the sea-shore the haughty appeal of Satan and the deep penitence of Eve. I was above twenty-five years old when I first looked at Dante ; one cyclopian corner of the great quaternion.

Delille. You studied much, however ; and study sharpens criticism.

Landor. I doubt it ; unless by references and comparisons. Only four years of my life were given up much to study ; and I regret that I spent so many so ill. Even these debarred me from no pleasure ; for I seldom read or wrote within-doors, excepting a few hours at night. The learning of those who are called the learned is learning at second-hand : the primary and most important must be acquired by reading in our own bosoms ; the rest a deep insight into other men's. What is written is mostly an imperfect and unfaithful copy.

Delille. You have taken little from others.

Landor. When I had irrigated my field from the higher sources of literature, I permitted the waste water to run off again. Few things remained in my memory as they entered ; more encumbered it ; many assumed fresh combinations.

Come : we must talk no longer about so obscure a man, in the presence of this severe censor and eminent poet. We will open

Satire VII.

> Mais tout fat me déplaît . . . et me blesse les yeux ;
> Je le *poursuis partout.*

Idle and silly ! were it practicable, it would be the ruin of satire.

Delille. Turn over, and you will find Boileau warmed by the fine French sentiment of loyalty to his king. Ay, that pleases you, I see.

Landor. No sentiment is more just or reasonable than loyalty ; but it should belong as much to kings as to their people: where it is not reciprocal, it is worth nothing. What insincerity, what baseness, to rave against the wild ambition of Alexander, who had all the spirit and all the talents of a consummate warrior, and to crouch at the feet of Louis with every expression of homage and admiration! — of Louis, who had no such talents, no such spirit; who exposed his person in no battle, but who ordered a massacre to win the favor of a saint, and consumed a province to cure a heresy! — a coward, a bigot, perfidious, ungrateful, perjured, who died so despised and hated, that his worshippers jumped up from their kneeling, and pelted his carcass with mire and ordure as it went to burial!

Delille. Ah, M. Landor! you cannot do him justice. You must exaggerate or you must detract.

Landor. Fénelon, than whom there never was a more dispassionate judge or a more veracious man, says of him in a letter to Madame de Maintenon, which it is probable he intended she should show to him, "that he had no idea of his kingly duties." Of what duties had he any?

The satire we have dipped into is borrowed in many parts from Horace, in many from Juvenal; yet Boileau has contrived to torpify with prose and puffing all the gayety of the one, and to weaken with cold and hoarseness all the declamation of the other.

Satire IX.

C'est à vous, mon Esprit, à qui je veux parler.

It is a pity that his *Esprit* was not summoned to this conference earlier; but even now it is only called to be talked to, and has more to hear than to say.

Mais moi qui, *dans le fond*, sçais bien ce . . .

A significant nod, to give the sentence the appearance of wit, which, if it lies anywhere in it, lies *dans le fond.*

Phébus a-t-il pour vous aplani le Parnasse?

The word *aplani* is not a very happy one since the difficulties of Parnassus are the triumphs of the poet. I must observe here that Apollo, Parnassus, &c., are too frequently used by your poets, and that nothing shows barrenness of invention more evidently than a perpetual recurrence to mythology on subjects unconnected with it. I know but one thing so subversive of illusion in works of fiction.

Delille. What is that?

Landor. The cant-word of novelists, *our hero;* by which you meet the author face to face inopportunely, and the vision is intercepted by him bodily. The hero whom he represents to us is perhaps a young gentleman fresh from college, whose feats of heroism have been upon a Wilton carpet, or in a pleasant walk among the trees with Emily, or in an innocent ride between two turnpike-gates. It closes with falling in love, with struggling to get out of it, with succeeding by the Leucadian leap of marriage, or in case of failure, as may happen, with blessing her devoutly "on his last legs," as we say in England. But again to an author who never was in this predicament, and who certainly leads us not into temptation of any kind.

Et ne sçavez-vous pas que, sur ce mont sacré,
Qui ne vole au sommet tombe au plus bas degré.

This is neither true nor ingenious. Horace has misled him by being misunderstood, where he says, —

. . . mediocribus esse poetis
Non homines, non dî, non concessere columnæ.

Now Horace himself, and Catullus and Tibullus, have never reached nor attempted to reach the summit of Parnassus; and equally certain is it that they have not fallen *au plus bas degré.* Their poetry is excellent in its kind; as among the French is that of La Fontaine. It is only those whose poetry has risen no higher than to mediocrity in its kind, whatever that kind may be, whose existence as poets is destined to a short duration. Catullus and Horace will be read as long as Homer and Virgil, and more often and by more readers.

Par l'*éclat d'un fardeau* trop pesant à porter.

This is the third time within a few pages that I have observed the metaphor; but I never heard until now that a *fardeau* could have an *éclat.* If it ever is attended by one, it must be, not while it is borne, but at the moment when it is thrown off.

> Peindre Bellone *en feu*, tonnant de toutes parts . . .

And what else? Mars, Minerva, Jupiter, the Fates, the Furies!

> Et le Belge effrayé . . .

but surely in some act of awful devotion; that, if we fall from such a height, it may be into the bosom of Pity. Ah no!

> . . . fuyant sur ses remparts.

How contemptible are these verses on Bellona and the Dutchman, in comparison with those they are intended to imitate!

> Cupidum, pater optime, vires
> Deficiunt: neque enim quivis horrentia pilis
> Agmina, nec fractâ pereuntes cuspide Gallos,
> Aut labentis equo describat vulnera Parthi.

Delille. This satire contains the line which has been so often quoted, —

> Et le clinquant du Tasse à tout l'or de Virgile, —

in which Boileau has scarcely his wonted discrimination. Surely, Tasso is a superb poet.

Landor. A few remarks on that foolish verse. Your poets have always felt a violent jealousy of the Italian. If Virgil had lived in the age of Tasso, and Tasso in the age of Virgil, Boileau would have transferred and commuted the designation, and have given the tinsel to Virgil, the gold to Tasso. There is little of tinsel in the *Gierusalemme*, and much of gold. The poet fails whenever he attempts the sublime, generally so called; but he seldom overloads his descriptions with idle words or frivolous decorations. His characters are more vivid and more distinct than Virgil's, and greatly more interesting. The heroes of the *Æneid* are like the half-extinct frescoes of Raphael; but what is wanting in the frescoes of the painter is effaced by time, what is wanting in the figures of the poet was wanting to his genius. No man ever formed in his mind an idea of Dido, or perhaps ever wished to form it; particularly on finding her memory so extensive and her years so mature that she could recollect the arrival of Teucer at Sidon. Mezentius is called a despiser of the gods ; yet the most pious speech in the *Æneid* comes from the lips of Mezentius, the most heroical of all the characters in that poem, and the most resigned to the will of Heaven : —

> Ast de me divôm pater atque hominum rex
> Viderit.

But who would walk among the scenery of woods and waterfalls, of glades and forests, of valleys in their retirement, and of corn-fields in their richness and profusion, for the sake of bringing home a few sticks and stubble? or who could receive more pleasure from such an occupation than from surveying the majestic growth of the trees and the infinite variety of the foliage?

Virgil has blemishes like Tasso, and Tasso has beauties like Virgil. The *Æneid*, I venture to affirm, is the most misshapen of epics, — an epic of episodes ; for these constitute the greater and better part. The *Gierusalemme Liberata* is, of all such compositions, the most perfect in its plan. In regard to execution, read any one book attentively, and I am persuaded, M. l'Abbé, that you would rather have written it than all the poetry of Voltaire and Boileau.

Let us go on with the volume before us.

> de sang-froid . . . et sans être amoureux,
> Pour quelqu'Iris en l'air faire le langoureux.

The superfluous on the superfluous ! Boileau is one of the forty who have done the same thing. One would imagine that there had lived in Paris some lady of this name, either by baptism or convention. The French poets, if they wished to interest the reader, should at least have engaged a name less hackneyed. Delia, Corinna, Lesbia, bring with them lively recollections. They are names not taken in vain by the Romans in the days of Roman glory ; and the women to whom they were first given were not ideal. Synonymous with beauty, grace, fondness, tenderness, they delight the memory by locality ; but we turn with indifference or with disgust from the common Palais Royal face of Iris. Boileau might have said to a patron, "you shall be my Apollo, my Richelieu, my

Louis:" the expression has something to rest upon: and why should not love enjoy the same privilege as patronage? The judicious La Fontaine has committed this inexcusable fault, and rendered it worse than he found it in any preceding poet; for, in an *Imitation of Anacreon*, he places Iris with Venus. Here he confuses the mythological Iris with the Iris to whom you raise, not a temple nor an altar (which I believe were never raised to the heavenly one), but a triangular hat over a buckled and powdered peruke.

> La Satire, en leçons, en nouveautés fertile,
> Sait seule assaisonner le plaisant et l'utile.

Rhyme consists in similarity of sound, not in identity: an observation that has escaped all your poets, and, what is more wonderful, all the Italian. Satire is less fertile in novelty than any other kind of poetry; and possesses not alone the power attributed to it, but, on the contrary, in a less degree than the rest. If it alone were endowed with this faculty, why should poets employ any kind else? Who would write what cannot be pleasant? Who, what cannot be useful? Satire alone would serve the purposes both of poetry and of prose: and we might expect to find a good satire in every good treatise on geometry, or metaphysics, or music, or cookery.

> Hé! mon dieu! craignez tout d'un auteur en courroux,
> Qui peut . . . Quoi? . . . Je m'entends . . . Mais encor? . . .
> Taisez-vous.

Thus ends this long monologue between Boileau and his *Esprit*, which must have rejoiced heartily at its dismissal. Perhaps no line is more suitable to the French taste than this last; so many short sentences, coming out singly and with breaks between them, like the notes in a cock's crow; so many things of which almost every man fancies that he alone is in the secret. I must confess it is really one to me; and, after all the interpretations it will bear, I find neither wit nor satire in it, nor even the sting of a dead epigram.

Delille. When you compare the tenth satire of Boileau with the manner in which women are attacked by Juvenal, you must be filled with admiration at perceiving how superior French morality is to Roman.

Landor. That is a knotty question, M. l'Abbé: we might bruise our hands, if we attempted to lay hold of it; it is safer to confine our observations to poetry.

Que, si sous Adam même . . . et *loin avant Noé.*

The same fault incessantly recurring! What was under Adam was long before Noah. Your marquises were not very profound in chronology; but even the most ignorant of them probably knew this fact, notwithstanding the league between his confessor and his vices to keep him from reading the book where it is recorded. In Boileau there is really more of diffuseness than of brevity; few observe it, because it abounds in short sentences: and few are aware that sentences may be very short and the writer very prolix; as half-a-dozen stones rising out of a brook give the passenger more trouble than a plank across it.

Villon et Saint-Gelais,
Arioste, Marot, Bocace, Rabelais.

One of the beauties at which Boileau aimed was the nitching of several names together in a verse, without any other word. Caligula spoke justly and admirably, when he compared the sentences of Seneca to lime without sand. Montesquieu, Voltaire, and their imitators, Frederick of Prussia and Catharine of Russia, were perhaps unconscious how perversely they imitated this blamable model of style, and how far they were in general from his gravity and acuteness. Florus and Valerius Maximus seem chiefly to have captivated the attention and to have formed the manner of Voltaire; as the style of our historian Hume is evidently taken from a French translation of Machiavelli.

Delille. Montesquieu, of whom Voltaire was among the earliest and best imitators, was a great admirer of Florus. Cardinal Duperon ranked him next to Tacitus, and above Tite-Live.

Landor. Well, Abbé, let us go on, and we shall find, I warrant you, something as silly as that. We will leave the shallow red hat upon the peg. Voltaire owed much to Montesquieu, but greatly more to Le Sage, whose elegance, purity, and variety never have been and never will be exceeded. We now come among clumsier valets than his.

> *Seul* avec des valets, souvent voleurs et traîtres,
> *Et toujours, à coup sûr, ennemis de leurs maîtres.*

Why so? in any other respect than as *voleurs et traîtres.*

> Et, pour le rendre libre, il le faut enchaîner.

This verse alone was worth a pension from Louis. It is indeed the most violent antithesis that ever was constructed; but, as a maxim in politics, it is admirably adapted to your nation, most happy under a despot, and most faithful under a usurper.

> Et ne présume pas que Vénus ou Satan, &c.

The two mythologies ought never to be confounded. This is worse than Bellona and the Dutchman, or than Mars *et le fameux fort de Skink.*

> L'honneur est comme une île escarpée et sans bords:
> On n'y peut plus rentrer dès qu'on en est dehors.

The simile is imperfect, because the fact is untrue. If an island can be entered once, it can be entered twice.

> Avec un air plus sombre
> S'en aller méditer une vole au jeu d'hombre.

There is no reason, except the rhyme, for this *air plus sombre.* When the lady only *thinks* of playing, she has encountered no ill success, and expects none; otherwise she would not play.

> Comme ce magistrat de hideuse mémoire.

The story of this magistrate is badly told; the progress of his passion is untraced. How much better is the Sir Balaam of Pope!

> Mais qui pourrait compter le nombre des haillons?

This picture is overcharged. It appears to me that the author had written two descriptions, and not wishing to lose either, nor knowing what to do with both, tacked them together to compose the tenth satire. He confesses that "le récit passe un peu l'*ordinaire*," and desires to know whether it could be given in fewer words. Horace will answer that it can be given both in fewer and better.

Mais qui la priverait huit jours *de ses plaisirs*,
Et qui, loin d'un galant . . . objet *de ses désirs*.

It is natural enough that the lady's gallant should be the object of her desires; but what shall we think of a versification which permits *de ses plaisirs* to be followed by *de ses désirs?*

Sa tranquille vertu conserve tous ses crimes.

A violent counterpoint! Antithesis was always fond of making inroads on the borders of absurdity.

Satire XII.

Et partout sa doctrine en peu de tems portée.

What can be added to its extent if it was *partout?* why —

Fut du Gange, du Nil, et du Tage écoutée.

Another falling off! Who in the world ever made a voyage to the Ganges for the purpose of arriving at the Tagus? The verse itself did not exact this penance: it could have been written as easily, —

Fut du Tage, du Nil, et du Gange écoutée.

This would have described, as it was intended, the progress of the Christian faith. The same fault is committed (and none but a bad reasoner, to say nothing of a bad poet, could commit it) in another couplet, which at this moment comes into my mind, but which, with many more, I have turned over.

Delille. Surely so grave a fault could hardly have escaped him twice.

Landor. What think you of

De Pékin . . à Paris . . et de Paris . . à Rome!

I know not where in any language to find such lethargic verses as the following: —

Sans simonie on peut contre un bien temporel
Hardiment échanger un bien spirituel.

Of all the wretched poets ridiculed by Boileau, not one, I believe, has written any thing so signally stupid. Turn to the *Discours au Roi.*

Je vais de toutes parts *où me guide ma veine,*
Sans tenir en marchant une route certaine;
Et, sans gêner ma plume en ce libre métier,
Je la laisse au hasard courir sur le papier.

This is untrue: if it were not, he would have written greatly worse than he did. Horace has misled him here, as on other occasions, by being misunderstood; he says, —

Ego apis Matinæ
More modoque
Grata carpentis thyma *per laborem*
Plurimum, &c.

This relates to the diversity of subjects chosen by the lyric poet; instead of which Boileau speaks merely of satires, and tells us that he corrects the age at hazard, and without the view or intention of correcting it.

Quand je vois ta sagesse en ses justes projets
D'une heureuse abondance enrichir tes sujets.

Here indeed he is a satirist, and a very bold one, and one who does not let his pen run at random over the paper.

Que je n'ai *ni le ton, ni la voix* assez forte.

This verse resembles that in his translation of Sappho: —

Je ne sçaurais trouver . . . de langue . . . ni de voix.

He places the tone and the voice in contradistinction: but what is the difference? Where the tone is loud the voice is loud, at least for the time. Here, as everywhere, you find the never-failing characteristic of your verse. Your heroic line rises and falls at a certain pitch, like the handle of a pump.

Delille. And yet our heroic verse is more generally read and applauded in Europe than the English.

Landor. Or than the Italian, or than the Latin, or than the Greek. Admiration is no proof of excellence: the point it comes from is its indication, and this point is one and narrow. It must proceed from reason: how few look for that! How few of those who look for it can find it in these regions! Where is the demonstration? Who is the demonstrator?

Epître I. *Au Roi.*

Boileau had just issued a long and laborious writ against Équivoque; he had despatched against it Noah's ark by sea and Heresy by land, when Apollo *éperdu* makes him suddenly the prize of his adversary. He has the simplicity to tell Louis that Apollo has cautioned him thus:—

> Cette mer où tu cours est célèbre en naufrages.

I hope Louis read this line some years afterward, when the application of it would scourge him severely. Deprived of all he had acquired by his treachery, unless the nation that brought him upon his knees had permitted two traitors, Harley and St. John, to second the views of a weak, obstinate, drunken old woman, and to obstruct those of policy and of England,—he had been carted to condign punishment in the Place de Grève, or at Tyburn. Such examples are much wanted, and, as they can rarely be given, should never be omitted.

This man is here called *grand roi* seven times within two hundred lines; and, to demonstrate that he really was so, the words are written in grand characters.

> Te livrer le Bosphore, et . . . d'un vers *incivil*
> Proposer au Sultan de te céder le Nil.

Can any one doubt that, if the letter *e* could have been added to *vers*, the poet would have written *civil* instead of *incivil?* I do not remember in any language an epithet so idle and improper.

> Ne t'avons-nous pas *vu* dans les plaines Belgiques,
> Quand l'ennemi vain*cu*, désertant ses remparts,
> Au devant de ton joug courait de toutes parts,
> Toi-même te borner?

Yes, with the assistance of William.

> Au devant de ton joug.

Surely, a beneficent prince has no occasion to impose a yoke upon those who run toward him willingly from all parts: nevertheless, the sentiment is national.

Iront de ta valeur *effrayer l'univers* . . .

A wise, beneficent, godlike action! but what follows? —

Et camper devant Dôle au milieu des hivers ! ! !

He grows more and more reasonable.

On verra les abus par ta main réformés,
La licence et l'orgueil en tous lieux réprimés,
Du débris des traitans ton épargne grossie,
Des subsides *affreux* la rigueur adoucie,
Le soldat, dans la paix, sage et . . . *laborieux*,
Nos artisans grossiers rendus . . . *industrieux*.

What idea must that nation entertain of poetry, which can call this so? To encounter such wretched lines, truly

C'est camper devant Dôle au milieu des hivers.

What more does Louis perform? —

Tantôt je tracerai tes *pompeux* bâtiments,
Du loisir d'un héros *nobles* amusements.

These noble amusements, with some others of the same hero, brought France into a state of poverty and wretchedness, which, neglected by his successors, hurled the least vicious of the family to the scaffold.

Delille. I am afraid you will censure some of my finest verses; such as, —

Eh! qui du sommet d'un côteau
Voyant le Nil au loin rouler *ses eaux pompeuses*,
Détournerait les yeux de ce *riche tableau*
Et de ces eaux majestueuses?

Or, —

Tel le *vaste* Apennin de sa cime *hautaine*.

Or even this, —

Ah, si ce *noble* instinct par qui le *grand* Homére . . .

Landor. Fine verses are often bad poetry. If these are really yours, they are your very worst.

Delille. My friends think otherwise.

Landor. Then they do you injustice. Never take their opinion, in future, unless upon an eel-pie.

Epître III.

I turn over the leaves hastily. Here we shall discover what happened when Adam was fallen :—

> Le chardon importun hérissa . . . les guérets,
> Le serpent *venimeux* rampa dans . . . les forêts.

According to this, matters were bettered. If the serpent had always been there, Adam would have lost nothing, and the importunity of the thistle would have been little to be complained of if it had only been in the *guérets*.

Epître IV. *Au Roi.*

> Comment en vers heureux assiéger Doësbourg,
> Zutphen, Wagheninghen, Harderwic, Knotzembourg?

These names are tacked together for no other purpose than the rhyme. He complains that they are difficult to pronounce, meaning to say difficult to spell: for certainly none of them is very harsh; but whenever a Frenchman finds a difficulty in spelling a word, he throws in a handful of consonants to help him over: these are the fascines of M. Boileau's approaches. The sound of *Wurts* is not offensive to the ear, without which the poet says,—

> Que j'allais à tes yeux étaler de merveilles!

As you French pronounce *Zutphen*, &c., they are truly harsh enough. But that is owing to your nasal twang, the most disagreeable and disgusting of sounds: being produced by the same means as a stink is rejected, and thus reminding us of one. The syllable *Zut* is not harsher than the first in *Zethes*, or *Phen* other than the first in *Phénix*. In fact, the sounds of *Grand Roi* are harsher than any that so powerfully offend him, as to stop him with his *raree-shew* on his back, when he had promised the king a peep at it. I well remember the difficulty I experienced in teaching a learned countryman of yours that,—

> "'Twas at the royal feast for Persia won". . .

is really a verse, and that *'twas* should not be pronounced *it was*,—inviting him to read the first line of the *Iliad*, in which he stumbled at θεά, and fell flat on his face at Πηληϊάδεω.

And let me ask here in regard to your use of the alphabet, what man of what nation, ancient or modern, could imagine the existence of a people on the same globe with himself, who employ the letters *e a u x* to express a sound which he and all others would express by the single vowel *o;* and that furthermore *oient* should signify neither more nor less than another single vowel *e?* And what is your barbarity to the most beautiful of the liquids! In *fils* you disinherit it: in *Versailles* you pour two of them into a gargle. If there is a letter that ought to have more force and strength in it than any other, it is the letter *x*, which in fact is composed of two stout ones, *k* and *s:* yet you make nothing of it.

I will now show you what to any organs sensible of harmony is really disagreeable: four similar sounds for instance in one verse, which occur in the last of this Epistle, written (we may conjecture) while the din of the blacksmith's shop, before complained of, was ringing in his ears: —

> *Non*, *non*, ne fais*ons* plus de plaintes inutiles:
> Puisqu' ainsi *dans* deux mois tu pr*ends* quar*ante* villes,
> Assuré des *bons* vers *dont ton* bras me ré*pond*,
> Je t'at*tends dans* deux *ans* aux bords de l'Helles*pont*.

I know nothing of the Dutch language: but I will venture a wager with you, M. l'Abbé, that the harshest verse in it is less so than these; and a Greek or an Italian shall decide. There are dozens similar.

> Je vais *faire* la *guerre* aux habitans de l'*air*.
> Il me *faut* du re*pos*, des pr*és* et des for*êts*.
> Ont *cru* me rendre affr*eux* aux *yeux* de l'*u*nivers.
> Ses écrits pleins de *feu* partout brillent aux *yeux*.

The man must have been born in a sawmill, or in France, or under the falls of Niagara, whose ear can suffer these. In the same Epistle we find, —

> À ces mots, essuyant sa barbe *limoneuse*,
> Il prend d'un vieux guerrier la figure *poudreuse*.

Another equivocation. Surely, if Boileau had found such poetry in an author of small repute, he would have quoted it as a thing too low to kick up, too flat to ridicule.

What does the Rhine, after wiping the mud off his whiskers with a clean cambric handkerchief, and assuming the powdered face of an old lieutenant-general? He

Du *fameux* fort de Skink prend la route *connue!*

And Louis, what is he about? —

Louis, les animant du feu de son courage,
Se plaint de sa grandeur . . . qui l'attache au rivage.

He had many such complaints to make against his grandeur: Cæsar and Alexander had none. A Gascon ran away from a fortress about to be bombarded; he was intercepted and brought back; and, on his trial before a court-martial, said in his defence that he had wished to exhibit his courage in the plain. If this had been permitted, it would probably have been found to be of the same kind as that of Louis.

Turn to the eighth Epistle, which is again addressed to the king. I pass over the intermediate, because it is reasonable to presume that, if Boileau looks not well in a court dress, he never looks well. In other cases, indeed, it would be unjust to confound the poet with the courtier: in him the courtier is the better part. I observe, too, that these Epistles are particularly celebrated by the editor for "the suppleness and grace of the versification, and for the equality, solidity, and fulness of the style."

Et mes vers en ce style, ennuyeux, sans appas,
Déshonorent ma plume et ne t'honorent pas.

If the verses were *ennuyeux et sans appas*, it is evident enough that they dishonored his pen; and what dishonored his pen could not honor his prince. This thought, which Boileau has repeated so often and so ill, is better expressed by several other of your poets, and shortly before by Malleville:

Mais je sçais quel effort demande cet ouvrage;
  La grandeur du sujet me doit épouvanter;
  Je trahirais sa gloire au lieu de l'augmenter,
Et ferais à son nom moins d'honneur que d'outrage.

Delille. That sonnet of Malleville is very beautiful.

Landor. Particularly in the conclusion: yet your critics preferred, to this and every other, one which displays Phillis and Aurora and Zephyr and Olympus, and in which a most polite apology is offered to the Sun for the assertion that the brightness of Phillis was as much superior to his as his was superior to that of the stars. They who reason so profoundly seem to argue thus: if it requires more skill in a tailor to give a fashionable cut and fresh glossiness to an old court-dress than to make a new one, it requires a better poet to refurbish a trite thought than to exhibit an original.

> Dans les *nobles douceurs* d'un séjour *plein de charmes*
> Tu n'es pas moins héros qu'au milieu des alarmes.

In the second line another equivocation! It is perfectly true that he was just as much a hero abed and asleep as in battle; but his heroism was chiefly displayed in these *nobles douceurs*. Pity that Boileau has written no ode on his marriage with a poor peasant girl, whom he met while he was hunting. The Virgin Mary would perhaps have been bridemaid, and Apollo would have presented the Gospel on which he swore. How many of your most glorious kings would, if they had been private men in any free country, or even in their own, have been condemned to the pillory and the galleys!

> De ton trône agrandi portant seul tout le faix.

This is the favorite metaphor of your poet: he ought to have known that kings do not carry the burden of thrones, but that thrones carry theirs; and that consequently the metaphor here is not only inelegant, as usual, but imperfect and misapplied.

> J'amasse de tes faits le pénible volume.

Again equivocation! In turning over the leaves to arrive at the *Art Poètique*, my eye rests on this verse in the twelfth Epistle: —

> Qui n'eut jamais pour dieu que glace . . .

A strange God enough! It is not to be wondered at if there should be no other in his company: but there is. Who? —

> . . . et que froideur.

There are follies on which it would be a greater folly to remark. Who would have the courage to ask whether there is not coldness where there is ice? A Latin poet however has written almost as ill: —

> Alpes
> Frigidus aerias atque alta cacumina.

Read the first lines in the *Art Poétique*:

> C'est en vain qu'au Parnasse un *téméraire auteur*
> Pense de l'art des vers atteindre la *hauteur*.

Auteur answers to *hauteur*. After this fashion an echo is the most accomplished of rhymers.

> S'il ne sent point du ciel l'influence secrète.

In that case he is not *téméraire*, and the epithet is worse than useless.

> Fuyez de ces auteurs l'abondance stérile,
> Et ne vous chargez point d'un détail inutile.

The first verse forestalls the second, which is flat; and the three following are worse.

> Ou le Temps qui s'enfuit . . . *une horloge à la main.*

He thinks it unreasonable that such an allegory should be censured. Time ought to be represented with no modern inventions to designate him. I presume M. Boileau means the *hour-glass* by his "horloge à la main;" but although we often see in prints an allegorical figure of this description, no poet should think that a sufficient reason for adopting it, but rather (if a better were wanting) for its rejection. An *hour-glass* in the hand of this mighty and awful power is hardly less ridiculous than a watch and seals.

> Soyez vif et pressé dans vos narrations,
> Soyez riche et *pompeux* dans vos descriptions.

I know not which to call the worse, the lines or the advice. But to recommend a man to be *rich* in any thing is a hint that cannot always be taken, as we poets know better than most men.

> J'aime mieux Arioste et ses fables comiques
> Que ces auteurs toujours froids et mélancoliques.

Really! This he intends as a *pis-aller*. Ariosto is a plagiary, the most so of all poets; Ariosto is negligent; his plan inartificial, defective, bad: but divide the *Orlando* into three parts, and take the worst of them, and, although it may contain a large portion of extremely vile poetry, it will contain more of good than the whole French language. M. de

Voltaire, like M. Boileau, spoke flippantly and foolishly of Ariosto: he afterward gave his reasons for having done it.

Delille. I do not remember them at present. Were they at all satisfactory, or at least ingenious?

Landor. They were very good ones indeed, and exactly such as might have been expected from a critic of his spirit and quickness.

Delille. Do you recollect the sum of them?

Landor. He had never read him! To make amends, he took him kindly by the hand, and preferred him to Dante.

Delille. He might have held back there. But where we have dirtied one shoe we may dirt the other: it does not cost a farthing more to clean a pair than an odd one. When, however, not contented with making the grasshopper so loud as to deafen the vales and mountains, Ariosto makes her deafen the sea and heavens, he says rather too much on this worst pest of Italy, this neutralizer of the nightingale.

> Cicala col noioso metro
> Fra i densi rami del fronzuto stelo
> Le valli e i monti *assorda*, e 'l mar e 'l cielo.

Landor. If he rises too high in one quarter, he falls in another too low. He speaks of Cardinal Ippolito di Este:

> magnanimo, sublime . . .
> Gran cardinal della chiesa di Roma!!

Since I love Ariosto next to Boccaccio, I am sorry at the discovery we have made together, that the two greatest personages in his *Orlando* are a cardinal and a grasshopper. But come along: we must go further, and may fare worse.

> Mais aussi pardonnez, si, plein de ce beau zèle,
> De tous vos pas *fameux* observateur fidèle,
> Quelquefois du bon or je sépare le faux.

What has *gold* to do, false or sterling, with *steps*, *zeal*, and *observation?* And does he mean to say that there is *false gold* in the *steps* of King Louis? This is surely what the *faithful observer* would not wish to render *famous*, in the midst of a panegyric! *Fameux*, I must remark, is a very favorite expression with him, and is a very unpoetical one. Poetry is the voice of Fame, and celebrates, not what is famous, but what deserves to be. Of this Boileau is ignorant. He uses the same epithet at the beginning of the *Lutrin*: —

> Et toi, *fameux* héros, dont la sage entremise
> De ce schisme naissant débarrassa l'Eglise,
> Viens d'un regard heureux *animer mon projet*,
> Et garde-toi de rire en si grave sujet.

The last advice suffocated any nascent facetiousness. To *animate a project* is nonsense.

> Et de longs traits de *feu* lui sortent par les *yeux*.

This is just as euphonious as the verse, —

> Ses écrits pleins de *feu* partout brillent aux *yeux*.

Another such is, —

> De ces ailes dans l'*air* secouant la pous*sière*.

Another no less, —

> . . . Invisible en ce *lieu*
> Je ne pourrai donc pl*us* être v*u* que de *Dieu*.

And another, —

> Là Xenophon dans l'*air* heurte contre un *La Serre*.

Here we come to the translation of Sappho's ode, in which all is wretchedly bad after the first stanza: —

> Je sens *de veine en veine* une subtile flamme
> Courir *par tout mon corps*.
> Je ne *sçaurais trouver* de *langue* . . . ni de *voix*.
> Un *nu*age con*fus* se répand sur ma *vue*.
> Je n'entends *plus* . . je tombe en de douces langueurs.

He had talked about *doux* transports two lines above.

> Et pâle, sans haleine, *interdite*, *éperdue*.

This is contrary to the manner of Sappho, as praised by Longinus, and nothing can be more diffuse, more tautological, more prosaic.

You must have remarked, M. l'Abbé, that I have frequently turned over several pages together, and that Familiar, as you may call me, of the Holy Office, I never have invested my meagre and hollow-eyed delinquent with colors of flame and images of devils. Ridicule has followed the vestiges of Truth, but never usurped her place. I have said nothing of the original *Odes*, commiserating their helpless fatuity. Only throw a glance over that on the taking of Namur: —

Quelle *docte* et sainte *ivresse*
Aujourd'hui *me fait la loi?*

"*Docte* ivresse!" What violent absurdity!

Et par cent bouches *horribles*
L'airain sur ces monts *terribles.*
Dix mille vaillans Alcides.
C'est Jupiter en personne,
Ou c'est le vainqueur . . . de Mons!
Saint-Omer, Besançon, Dôle,
Yprès, Mastricht, et Cambrai!!!
Accourez, Nassau, Bavière . . .

To do what? —

Considérer . . . ces approches
Louis à tout donnant l'âme,
Marcher, courir avec eux.

He might have marched with 'em, but he ran before 'em!

Son gouverneur, *qui se trouble,*
De corps morts, de rocs, de *briques.*

Here, I observe, the editor says, "le son de ces mots répond à ce qu'ils expriment." Pray, M. l'Abbé, which is the sound among them that resembles the dead bodies?

Delille. The odes of Boileau, I confess, are inferior to the choruses of Racine in *Athalie.*

Landor. Diffuse and feeble paraphrases from the Psalms! The best ode in your language is in the form of a sonnet by Gombaud, —

La voix qui retentit, &c.

Racine has stolen many things from Euripides: he has spoiled most of them, and injured all. The beautiful lines which Lucretius had before him in his description of Iphianassa are thus Frenchified: —

Fille d'Agamemnon, c'est moi qui la première
Vous appellai, Seigneur, *de ce doux nom de père.*

This reflection ought to come from the father, as in Lucretius, not from the daughter.

The most admired verse of Racine, —

> Je crains Dieu, cher Abner, &c., —

is taken almost literally from Godeau. *Cher Abner* favors the theft. The line preceding is useless, and shows, as innumerable other instances do, his custom of making the first *for* the second, and *after* it. He has profited much from the neglected poets of your country, and wants energy because he wants originality. You pause, M. l'Abbé.

Delille. I cannot well believe that if Boileau, to say nothing of Racine, was a poet so faulty as you represent him, he would have escaped the censure of such sound critics and elegant writers as Johnson and Warton.

Landor. And poets, too; the former so powerful that he made the tempests sigh, —

> "O'er the sad plains perpetual tempests sigh," —

the latter, that he reduced flame to the temperature of new milk, —

> "How *burnt* their bosoms with *warm* patriot flame!"

Delille. Well, what is amiss?

Landor. I perceive, my dear Abbé, that you slide easily on the corruptions of our language. In fashionable life we say, "I am very *warm*," instead of, "I am very *hot;*" the expression is wrong. Warmth is temperate heat; we never say *red-warm*, but *red-hot;* never *burning-warm*, but *burning-hot;* we use a *warming-pan* for our beds, a *heater* of red-hot iron for our tea-urns. The epithet of *warm* applied to *flame* is worse than childish: for children speak as they feel; bad poets, from reminiscences and arrangements. Johnson had no feeling for poetry; and Warton was often led astray by a feverish and weak enthusiasm.

Delille. Some of his observations are very just.

Landor. Others are trivial and superficial. He seldom demonstrates his objections, or ascends to the sources of his admiration. Johnson is practised in both; sometimes going wrong from an obliquity in his view of poetry, rarely from his ratiocination. Neither of them saw the falsity of Pope's inference at the commencement of the *Essay on Man*: —

> "Let us, since life can little more supply
> Than just to look around us and to die,
> Expatiate free o'er all this maze of man."

If human life is so extremely contracted, there is little encouragement to expatiate in all its maze, and little power to expatiate *freely*, — which can only mean *leisurely*, for freedom of will or purpose is not in question.

Delille. Johnson may not have been quite so learned as some whose celebrity is less; for I believe that London is worse furnished with public libraries of easy access than any city in Europe, not excepting Constantinople; and his private one, from his contracted circumstances, must have been scanty.

Landor. He was studious; but neither his weak eyes nor many other infirmities, on which a severe mental disquietude worked incessantly, would allow him all the reading he coveted: beside, he was both too poor and too wise to collect a large body of authors.

Delille. Ignorant men are often more ambitious than the learned of copious libraries and curious books, as the blind are fonder of sunshine than the sighted. Surely the judgment of Johnson was correct, the style elegant.

Landor. I have spoken of his judgment in poetry. In regard to elegance of style, it appears to me that a sentence of Johnson is like that article of dress which your nation has lately made peace with, — divided into two parts, equal in length, breadth, and substance, with a protuberance before and behind. Warton's essay on Pope is a cabinet of curiosities, in which are many trifles worth looking at, nothing to carry about or use.

Delille. That Racine and Boileau were great borrowers is undeniable.

Landor. And equally that they were in the habit of paying a small portion of the debt.

Delille. Even your immortal Shakspeare borrowed from others.

Landor. Yet he was more original than the originals. He breathed upon dead bodies and brought them into life.

Delille. I think, however, I can trace Caliban, — that wonderful creature, — when I survey attentively the Cyclops of Euripides.

Landor. He knew nothing of Euripides or his Cyclops. That poet, where he is irregular, is great; and he presents more shades and peculiarities of character than all other poets of antiquity put together. Yet in several scenes he appears to have written principally for the purpose of inculcating his political and moral axioms: almost every character introduces them, and in almost every place. There is a regular barter of verse for verse; no credit is given for a proverb, however threadbare; the exchange is paid on the nail for the commodity. The dogmas, like *valets de place*, serve any master and run to any quarter. Even when new, they nevertheless are miserably flat and idle: how different from the striking sentences employed unsparingly by Pindar, which always come recommended by some appropriate ornament! Virgil and Ovid have interspersed them with equal felicity. The dialogue of Euripides is sometimes dull and heavy; the construction of his fable infirm and inartificial; and in the chorus I cannot but exclaim, —

> "There be *two* Richards in the field to-day!"

Aristophanes, who ridicules him in his *Comedies*, treats him disdainfully as the competitor of Sophocles, and speaks probably the sense of the Athenians in the meridian of their literature. If, however, he was not considered by them as the equal of Sophocles in dramatic power, or in the continuous strain of poetical expression, yet sensible men in all ages will respect him, and the more because they fancy they discover in him greater wisdom than others have discovered: for while many things in his tragedies are direct, and many proverbial, others are allusive and vague, occurring in various states of mind and temperatures of feeling. There is little of the theatrical in his works; and his characters are more anxious to show their understanding than their sufferings.

Euripides came down farther into common life than Sophocles, and he farther down than Æschylus: one would have expected the reverse. But the marvellous had carried Æschylus from the earth, and he filled with light the whole region in which he rested. The temperate greatness and pure eloquence of Pericles formed the moral constitution of Sophocles, who had exercised with him a principal magistracy in the republic ; and the demon of Socrates, not always unimportunate, followed Euripides from the school to the theatre. The decencies of the *boudoir* were unknown to him: he would have shocked your chambermaids. Talthybius calls Polyxena a calf ; her mother had done the same ; and Hercules, in *Alcestis*, is drunk.

Delille. This is horrible, if true. Virgil (to venture nothing further about Racine), Virgil is greatly more judicious in his Dido.

Landor. The passion of Dido is always true to Nature. Other women have called their lovers cruel ; she calls Æneas so, not chiefly for betraying and deserting her, but for hazarding his life by encountering the tempests of a wintry sea:

> " Even if it were not to foreign lands and unknown habitations that you were hastening, even if Troy were yet in existence and you were destined thither, would you choose a season like this ? Would you navigate a sea of which you are ignorant, under the stars of winter ? "

I must repeat the lines, for the sake of proposing an improvement:—

Quinetiam *hyberno* moliris sidere classem,
Et mediis properas aquilonibus ire per altum.
Crudelis ! quod si non arva aliena domosque
Ignotas peteres, et Troja antiqua maneret,
Troja per *undosum* peteretur classibus æquor ?

If *hybernum* were substituted for *undosum*, how incomparably more beautiful would the sentence be for this energetic repetition !

Delille. Adjectives ending with *osus* express abundance and intensity to such a degree that some learned men derive the termination from *odi*, the most potent and universal of feelings.

Landor. If it be so, *famosus*, *jocosus*, *nemorosus*, *fabulosus*, *sabulosus*, &c., must have been a later brood.

Undosum, with all its force, would be far from an equivalent for *hybernum*, even if the latter held no fresh importance from apposition.

My admiration of the author of the *Æneid*, as you see, is not inferior to yours; but I doubt whether he has displayed *on the whole* such poetical powers as the author of *Alcestis*, who excels in variety and peculiarity of character all the ancient poets. He has invented, it is true, nothing so stupendous nor so awful as the Prometheus: but who has? The Satan of Milton himself sinks below it; for Satan, if he sometimes appears with the gloomy grandeur of a fallen angel, and sometimes as the antagonist of Omnipotence, is often a thing to be thrown out of the way, among the rods and foolscaps of the nursery.

Virgil is not so vigorous as Lucretius, so elegant and graceful as Catullus, so imaginative and diversified as Ovid. All their powers united could not have composed the *Æneid;* but in the *Æneid* there is nothing so epic as the contest of Ulysses and Ajax in the *Metamorphoses*. This, in my opinion, is the most wonderful thing in the whole range of Latin poetry; for it unites (what appears incompatible) two pieces of pleading, never excelled by Roman or Athenian orator, with exquisitely discriminated characters and unparalleled heroic composition. The *Iliad* itself has nothing in the *contentional* so interesting or so animated. When Ajax hath ended, who can doubt of his having gained the cause? Ulysses rises, slowly, modestly; and our enthusiasm subsides just sufficiently to allow him a patient hearing. By degrees he engages, moves, and almost convinces us. At last, when we hesitate and waver, he displays the Palladium before us; and we are gained by that which gained the city, by that which terminates our toils, by that which restores to us our country and our home.

Delille. Ah! you fancy yourself among them. You should have been there.

Landor. I was; I am: I have been often, and shall be often yet. Let me escape for a moment from the soapsuds of the Seine, and plunge into the Scamander.

Delille. There are fine speeches, and speeches as long sustained, on our stage.

Landor. So much the worse. But in those four hundred lines (such I think is about the quantity) four should be omitted.

Delille. Which are they?

Landor.

> Perque deos oro quos hosti nuper ademi,
> Per si quid superest, si quid sapienter *agendum*,
> Si quid adhuc audax ex precipitique *petendum*,
> Si Trojæ *fatis* aliquid restare *putatis*.

Delille. I see the reason: he rhymes.

Landor. He falls oftener into this fault than any other of the ancients. I would, however, that the four lines were omitted, not only for this but for different reasons. First, after winning his auditors by his modesty, he speaks too much and too directly of his courage and sagacity; secondly, and chiefly, in mentioning the gods he had taken from the enemy, he weakens the effect. Enough was said and done already, by holding out the Palladium, and crying *Huic date!* By this pause he had attained sublimity. There are rhymes, perhaps not unintentional, in Lucretius and in Virgil. Similar sounds at stated distances, although they offend us in the terminations of Greek and Latin verse, occur with admirable power in the most impassioned sentences of Demosthenes and Cicero.

Delille. Surely, you would never set up Ovid for the imitation or improvement of our young poets in preference to Virgil?

Landor. Quite the contrary. I wish Virgil, in particular, were followed by our juvenile sweepers of the Haram: he might be without diminution of their grace or strength. Indeed he has been once, in the riddle, —

> Dic quibus in terris (et eris mihi magnus Apollo)
> Tres pateat *cœli* spatium non amplius ulnas.

The family of Cœlius, you know, was of Verona; and occasionally, it is probable, a visitant of Mantua. He upon whose tomb the ingenuity of Menalcas was about to be exercised is perhaps the same to whom, fifteen years before, Catullus addressed two of his lighter compositions. Now, Abbé,

> "Know you the land,
> Where the citron and olive are fairest of fruit,
> And the voice of the nightingale never is mute?"

Delille. Out upon it! I have it: a grocer's shop kept by one Nightingale. It cannot be otherwise; for olives and citrons in their natural state are ugly enough, but preserved and pickled they fairly beat almonds, raisins, figs, pistachios, and prunes.

Landor. I have heard the paradox that the author intended no enigma.

Delille. His enemies and rivals may assert it.

Landor. They declare that he really means Turkey.

Delille. Ha! ha! ha! spiteful rogues! If it were indeed not a man's house, but a region of the earth, it must be one where there is no peach, apricot, plum, raspberry, strawberry, cranberry, cherry, grape, currant, or crab; and I conceive that in such a situation there can hardly be citron or olive. The nightingale sings for a shorter season than any other bird; his song continues few weeks, and there is something in it like the happiness of man before the Fall: vivid and exuberant, but melancholy from its solitude, and from the shades that we perceive are closing on it.

Landor. You have earned your release from doubt. Whatever was the poet's first intention, he himself now declares that he has no concern in Nightingale's shop, that his idea is not borrowed from Virgil, and that the land, upon his faith,

"Is the clime of the East, is the land of the Sun."

Delille. Pray which? A pleasant release from doubt! — a release like a push given by a jailer to his prisoner in the cell, with a cry of *Get out, you rogue!* as he turns the key upon him.

Landor. We may observe that, really,

"The voice of the nightingale never is mute."

Delille. Oh yes, surely. I am supported by Buffon.

Landor. Songs may be mute! for songs may exist unsung; but voices exist only while they sound. In the same poem I find that, —

"If aught his lips *essay'd* to groan,
The rushing billows choked the tone."

They need not take the trouble: I will answer for lips doing no harm in the way of groaning, let them *essay* it as long as they list.

We have in England, at the present time, many poets far above what was formerly thought mediocrity; but our national taste begins to require excitement. Our poems must contain *strong things;* we call for essences, not for flowers; we run across from the old grove and soft meadow into the ruined abbey, the Albanian fortress, and the sultan's garden; we cut down our oaks and plant cypresses; we reprove our children for not calling a *rose* a *gul;* we kick the first shepherd we meet, and shake hands with the first cut-throat; we are resolved to excite tears, but we conjure them forth at the point of the dagger; and, if they come slower than we wish, we bully and blaspheme.

Nothing is easier than to catch the air of originality now blowing: do not wonder that it pleases the generality. You and I perhaps have stopped, like the children and the servants, to look at a fine transparency on a staircase, while many who call themselves professors have passed a Raphael by, and have never noticed it. Let us censure no one for being easily pleased, but let *us* do the best we can. Whenever I find a critic or satirist vehement against the writers of his age and country, I attribute more of his inspiration to vanity than to malignity, much as I may observe of this. No good writer was ever long neglected; no great man overlooked by men equally great. Impatience is a proof of inferior strength, and a destroyer of what little there may be. Whether, think you, would Shakspeare be amused or mortified, if he were sitting in the pit during the performance of his best tragedy, and heard no other exclamation from one beside him than, "How beautifully those scenes are painted! what palaces, waterfalls, and rocks!"

Delille. I wish he were more dramatic.

Landor. You would say, more observant of certain rules established for one species of the drama. Never was poet so dramatic, so intelligent of stage-effect. I do not defend his anachronisms, nor his confusion of modern customs with ancient; nor do I willingly join him when I find him with Hector and Aristoteles, arm-in-arm, among knights, esquires, and fiddlers. But our audiences and our princes in those days were resolved that all countries and all ages should be subservient at once, and perceived no incongruity in bringing them together.

Delille. Yet what argument can remove the objection made against your poet, of introducing those who in the first act are children, and grown-up men in the last?

Landor. Such a drama I would not call by the name of tragedy; nevertheless it is a drama, and a very beautiful species of it. Delightful in the first degree are those pieces of history in verse and action, as managed by Shakspeare.

Delille. We must contend against them; we must resist all barbarous inroads on classic ground, all innovations and abuses.

Landor. You fight against your own positions. Such a work is to tragedy what a forest is to a garden. Those alone are wrong who persist in calling it a garden rather than a forest; who find oaks instead of tulips; who look about the hills and dales, the rocks and precipices, the groves and waterfalls, for flues and balusters and vases, and smooth marble steps and shepherdesses in hoops and satin. There are some who think these things as unnatural as that children should grow into men, and that we should live to see it.

Delille. Live to see it! — but in one day or night!

Landor. The same events pass before us within the same space of time whenever we look into history.

Delille. Ay, but here they act.

Landor. So they do there, unless the history is an English one. And, indeed, the histories of our country read by Shakspeare held human life within them. When we are interested in the boy, we spring forward to the man with more than a poet's velocity. We would interrogate the oracles; we would measure the thread around the distaff of the Fates: yet we quarrel with him who knows and tells us all.

Glory to thee in the highest, thou confidant of our Creator! who alone hast taught us in every particle of the mind how wonderfully and fearfully we are made.

Delille. Voltaire was indeed too severe upon him.

Landor. Severe? Is it severity to throw a crab or a pincushion at the Farnese Hercules or the Belvedere Apollo? It is folly, perverseness, and impudence in poets and critics like Voltaire, whose best composition in verse is a hard mosaic, sparkling and superficial, of squares and parallelograms, one speck each. He, whose poems are worth all that have been composed from the creation to the present hour, was so negligent or so secure of fame as to preserve no copy of them.

Homer and he confided to the hearts of men the treasures of their genius, which were, like conscience, unengraved words. A want of sedulity, at least in claiming the property of thoughts, is not among the deficiencies of our modern poets. Some traveller, a little while ago, was so witty as to call Venice Rome; not indeed the Rome of the Tiber, but the Rome of the sea. A poet, warm with keeping up the ball from gazette to gazette, runs instantly to the printers, out of breath at so glorious an opportunity of perpetuating his fame, and declares to all Europe that he had called Venice Rome the year before. We now perceive, but too late for the laurel which they merited, what prodigious poets were your Marat and Bonaparte and Robespierre, with whom England one day was Tyre, another day Carthage, and Paris the Rome of the Seine.

Delille. The most absurd imitation of antiquity I can remember anywhere is in Stay's *Modern Philosophy.** He had found in Virgil the youths and maidens carried on their biers before the faces of their parents; and he makes those of England *hang themselves* before them. He was unaware that the parents might cut them down, or that the young people could think it likely.

> Ergo, quæ jubeant prædura incommoda, vitam
> Exsolvunt letho; seu ferrum in viscera condunt,
> Seu se præcipites in *flumen*, in *æquora* mittunt,
> Seu potius laqueo innexo suspendere *gaudent*
> Se manibus *persæpe* suis *ante ora parentum.*
> Lib. III.

Landor. We have wandered (and conversation would be tedious unless we did occasionally) far from the subject: but I have not forgotten our Cyclops and Caliban. The character of the Cyclops is somewhat broad and general, but worthy of Euripides, and such as the greatest of Roman poets was incapable of conceiving; that of Caliban is peculiar and stands single: it is admirably imagined and equally well sustained. Another poet would have shown him spiteful: Shakspeare has made the infringement of his idleness the origin of his malice. He has also made him grateful; but then his gratitude is the return for an indulgence granted to his evil appetites. Those who by nature are grateful are often by nature vindictive: one of these properties is the sense of kindness, the other of unkindness. Religion and comfort require that the one should be cherished, and that the other should be suppressed. The mere conception of the monster without these qualities, without the sudden impression which bring them vividly out, and the circumstances in which they are displayed, would not be to considerate minds so stupendous as it appeared to Warton, who little knew that there is a *nil admirari* as requisite to wisdom as to happiness.

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* Praised, and perhaps read, by Coleridge.

Delille. And yet how enthusiastic is your admiration of Shakspeare!

Landor.

> "He lighted with his golden lamp on high
> The unknown regions of the human heart,
> Show'd its bright fountains, show'd its rueful wastes,
> Its shoals and headlands ; and a tower he rais'd
> Refulgent, where eternal breakers roll,
> For all to see, but no man to approach."

The creation of Caliban, wonderful as it is, would excite in me less admiration than a single sentence, or a single sentiment, such as I find in fifty of his pages.

No new fiction of a supernatural being exists in poetry. Hurd traces the genealogy of the Fairies, and fancied he made a discovery: the Sylphs have only another name. Witches and wizards and giants, apparently powerful agents, generally prove the imbecility of the author who has any thing to do with them. Dragons and demons awaken our childish fancies, some of which remain with us to the last. Dreams perhaps generated them, superstition presented them with names and attributes, and the poet brings them forth into action.

Take your Boileau. Some morning, when we are both of us quite at leisure, I will engage (if I have not done it already) to make out a full hundred of puerilities in your grave, concise, elegant poet. At present I have nothing more to say, than that he never elevates the mind, he never warms or agitates the heart, he inspires no magnanimity, no generosity, no tenderness. What then is he worth? A smile from Louis.

Delille. There are excellences, my friend, in Boileau, of which you cannot judge so correctly as a native can: for instance his versification.

Landor. I would not creep into the secrets of a versification upon which even you, M. Delille, can ring no changes: a machine which must be regularly wound up at every six syllables, and the construction of which is less artificial than that of a cuckoo-clock. The greater part of the heroic verses in your language may be read with more facility as anapestic than as iambic: there is not a syllable which may not become either short or long, however it usually be pronounced in conversation. The secret of conciseness I know and will communicate to you, so that you may attain it in the same manner and with the same facility as Boileau and Voltaire have done.

Delille. Indeed it costs me infinite pains, and I almost suspect I have sometimes failed.

Landor. Well then, in future you may be master of it without any pains at all. Do what they did. Throw away the little links and hinges, the little cramps and dovetails, which lay upon the tables of Homer and of Virgil, which were adjusted with equal nicety by Cicero, Plato, and Demosthenes, and were not overlooked by Bossuet and Pascal; then dock the tail of your commas, and behold a period!

The French are convinced that all poetry, to be quite perfect, must be theirs or like it, and remark the obligations that Milton lay under to the Abbé Delille, and Shakspeare to Voltaire. Next in vanity is the declaration of a writer on heraldry, that Raphael, Correggio, and Leonardo were incapable of painting a *fleur de lis*, and that none but a Frenchman by birth and *courage* could arrive at this summit of glory!

"J'estime qu'il est fort difficile, de bien faire et représenter une fleur de lis *mignonnement troussée*, qui n'est peintre excellent et Français *de nation et de courage:* car un Allemand, un Anglais, Espagnol, et Italien, n'en sçauront *venir à son honneur*, pour la bien proportionner." — *Théâtre d'Honneur*, par Fauyn, b. 2, c. 6, p. 185.

What is called a *fleur de lis* is in fact a spear-head. Chifflet wrote a treatise to prove that it was a *bee*. Joannes Ferrandus Aniciensis composed an *Epinicion pro liliis*. It is wonderful that painters of such courage left any doubt whether what they had drawn so accurately were a flower, a spear-head, or a bee! Before this controversy the Florentines used the *iris* as the symbol of their city; it being indigenous, its root very fragrant, and used in flavoring wine. We call it *orris*, corruptly.

The good Abbé Delille entertained a high esteem for Milton, but felt that Adam and Eve, Michael and Satan, could not be *mignonnement troussés* unless by the hand of a Parisian.

V. MIDDLETON AND MAGLIABECHI.

Magliabechi. The pleasure I have enjoyed in your conversation, sir, induces me to render you such a service as never yet was rendered by an Italian to a stranger.

Middleton. You have already rendered me several such, M. Magliabechi; nor, indeed, can any man of letters converse an hour with you and not carry home with him some signal benefit.

Magliabechi. Your life is in danger, Mr. Middleton.

Middleton. How! impossible! I offend no one, in public or in private: I converse with you only: I avoid all others; and, above all, the busy-bodies of literature and politics. I court no lady: I never go to the palace: I enjoy no favors: I solicit no distinctions: I am neither poet nor painter. Surely then I, if any one, should be exempt from malignity and revenge.

Magliabechi. To remove suspense, I must inform you that your letters are opened, and your writings read by the police. The servant whom you dismissed for robbery has denounced you.

Middleton. Was it not enough for him to be permitted to plunder me with impunity? Does he expect a reward for this villany? Will his word or his oath be taken?

Magliabechi. Gently, Mr. Middleton. He expects no reward: he received it when he was allowed to rob you. He came recommended to you as an honest servant, by several noble families. He robbed them all: and a portion of what he stole was restored to them by the police, on condition that they should render to the Government a mutual service when called upon.

Middleton. Incredible baseness! Can you smile at it, M. Magliabechi! Can you have any communication with these wretches, — these nobles, as you call them, — this servant, this police!

Magliabechi. My opinion was demanded by my superiors upon some remarks of yours on the religion of our country.

Middleton. I protest, sir, I copied them in great measure from the Latin work of a learned German.*

Magliabechi. True; I know the book: it is entitled *Facetiæ Facetiarum.* There is some wit and some truth in it; but the better wit is, the more dangerous is it; and truth, like the sun, coming down on us too directly, may give us a brain-fever.

In this country, Mr. Middleton, we have *jalousies* not only to our windows but to our breasts: we admit but little light to either, and we live the more comfortably for so doing. If we changed this custom, we must change almost every other; all the parts of our polity having been gradually drawn closer and closer, until at last they form an inseparable mass of religion, laws, and usages. For instance, we condemn as a dangerous error the doctrine of Galileo, that the earth moves about the sun; but we condemn rather the danger than the error of asserting it.

Middleton. Pardon my interruption. When I see the doctors of your church insisting on a demonstrable falsehood, have I not reason to believe that they would maintain others less demonstrable, and more profitable? All questions of politics, of morals, and of religion ought to be discussed; but principally should it be examined whether our eternal happiness depends on any speculative point whatever; and secondly, whether those speculative points on which various nations insist as necessary to it are well or ill-founded. I would rather be condemned for believing that to kill an ibis is a sin, than for thinking that to kill a man is not. Yet the former opinion is ridiculed by all modern nations, while the murder of men by thousands is no crime, providing they be flourishing and happy, or will probably soon become so; for then they may cause discontent in other countries, and indeed are likely to excite the most turbulence when they sit down together the most quietly.

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* Perhaps he may also have cast a glance on *Les Conformités des Cérémonies modernes avec les Anciennes*, of Jean de Croi; and, although he was less likely to acknowledge where it was less likely to be detected, he might have added that the whole idea and much of the substance of his *Letter from Rome* was taken from a passage in Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy.* All the remainder may be found in Josiah Stopford's *Pagano-Papismus.*

Magliabechi. Let us rather keep within the tenets of our church.

Middleton. Some of them are important, some are not; and some appeared so in one age of the church, which were cast aside in another.

Magliabechi. Pray which were they?

Middleton. She now worships the blessed Virgin Mary: anciently she condemned the Collyridians for doing it, and called them heretics. Was she infallible then; or is she now? Infants were formerly admitted by her to the Eucharist, and she declared that they could not be saved without it: she now decrees that the doctrine is false. Formerly it was her belief that, before the destruction of the world, Christ should reign upon earth a thousand years, and the saints under him: at present she has no mind that either of them should be so near her. Although there are many things wherein much may be said on both sides, yet it is only on one side in any question that the same thing can be said.

Magliabechi. This is specious, and delivered temperately.

Middleton. Saint Augustine is esteemed among the infallible?

Magliabechi. Certainly; and with justice.

Middleton. He declares that the dead, even saints, are ignorant what the living do; even their own children; for the souls of the dead, he says, *interfere not in the affairs of the living.**

Magliabechi. This is strong; but divines can reconcile it with religion.

Middleton. What can they not?

Magliabechi. I will tell you what they cannot: and it is this on which I began our conversation.

Among your other works I find a manuscript on the inefficacy of prayer. I defended you to my superiors, by remarking that Cicero had asserted things incredible to himself merely for the sake of argument, and had probably written them before he had fixed in his mind the personages to whom they should be attributed in his dialogues; that, in short, they were brought forward for no other purpose than discussion and explosion. This impiety was forgiven. But every man in Italy has a favorite saint, for whose honor he deems it meritorious to draw (I had almost said the sword) the stiletto.

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* Nesciunt mortui, etiam sancti, quid agant vivi, etiam eorum filii; quia animæ mortuorum rebus viventium non intersunt. *De Curâ pro Mortuis.*

Middleton. It would be safer to attempt dragging God from his throne than to split a spangle on their petticoats, or to puff a grain of powder from their wigs: this I know. Nothing in my writings is intended to wound the jealousy of the Italians. Truth, like the juice of the poppy, in small quantities calms men; in larger, heats and irritates them, and is attended by fatal consequences in its excess. For which reason, with plain ground before me, I would not expatiate largely; and I often made an argument, that offered itself, give way altogether and leave room for inferences. My treatise on prayer was not to be published in my lifetime.

Magliabechi. And why at any time? Supposing prayer to be totally inefficacious in the object, is not the mind exalted, the heart purified, are not our affections chastened, our desires moderated, our enjoyments enlarged by this intercourse with the Deity? And are not men the better, as certainly they are the happier, for a belief that he interferes in their concerns? They are persuaded that there is something conditional between them, and that, if they labor under the commission of crimes, their voice will be inaudible as the voice of one under the nightmare.

Middleton. I wished to demonstrate that we often treat God in the same manner as we should treat some doting or some passionate old man: we feign, we flatter, we sing, we cry, we gesticulate.

Magliabechi. Worship him in your own manner, according to the sense he has given you; and let those who cannot exercise that sense rely upon those who can. Be convinced, Mr. Middleton, that you never will supplant the received ideas of God; be no less convinced that the sum of your labors in this field will be to leave the ground loose beneath you, and that he who comes after you will sink. In sickness, in our last particularly, we all are poor wretches; we are nearly all laid on a level by it: the dry-rot of the mind supervenes, and loosens whatever was fixed in it, except religion. Would you be so inhuman as to tell a friend in this condition not to be comforted? Would you prove to him that the crucifix, which his wandering eye finds at last its resting-place, is of the same material as his bedpost? Suppose a belief in the efficacy of prayer to be a belief altogether irrational, — you may: I never can, — suppose it to be insanity itself, would you, meeting a young man who had wandered over many countries in search of a father until his intellects are deranged, and who in the fulness of his heart addresses an utter stranger as the lost parent, clings to him, kisses him, sobs upon his breast, and finds comfort only by repeating *father! father!* — would you, Mr. Middleton, say to this affectionate fond creature, *Go home, sit quiet, be silent!* and persuade him that his father is lost to him?

Middleton. God forbid!

Magliabechi. You have done it: do it no more. The madman has not heard you; and the father will pardon you when you meet.

Middleton. Far be it from my wishes and from my thoughts to unhinge those portals through which we must enter to the performance of our social duties; but I am sensible of no irreligion, I acknowledge no sorrow or regret, in having attempted to demonstrate that God is totally and far removed from our passions and infirmities, and that whatever seems fit to him will never seem unfit in consequence of our entreaties. I would inculcate entire resignation to the divine decrees, acquiescence in the divine wisdom, confidence in the divine benevolence. There is something of frail humanity, something of its very decrepitude, in our ideas of God; we are foolish and ignorant in the same manner, and almost to the same degree, as those painters are who append a gray beard to his chin, draw wrinkles across his brow, and cover him with a gaudy and flowing mantle.

Our Saviour does not command us to pray, although his example, for especial purposes, appears to countenance it. His nature, and the nature of his mission, might require this intercourse. He says only, "When ye pray," &c.; or, in other words, "If you will pray, let your prayer be," &c. For on more than one occasion, desirous as he was of interfering but little with established usages, he condemned the prayers of the Jews.

Magliabechi. They were too long.

Middleton. They were not longer (as far as I know) than those of other nations.* In short, if we believe the essence of God to be immutable, we must believe his will to be so. It is insanity to imagine that his determination can be altered by our whims or wishes; therefore it is not only more wise but also more reverent to suppress them, both in action and in speech. Supposing him altered or moved by us, we suppose him subject to our own condition. If he pardons, he corrects his first judgment; he owns himself to have been wrong and hasty, — than which supposition what impiety can be greater?

Magliabechi. Do you question every thing that is not in the form of syllogism, or enthymema, or problem with corollary and solution?

Middleton. I never said that what is indemonstrable must therefore be untrue; but whatever is indemonstrable may be questioned, and, if important, should be. We are not to tremble at the shaking of weak minds: Reason does not make them so; she, like Virtue, is debilitated by indulgences, and sickened to death by the blasts of heat and cold blown alternately from your church.

Magliabechi. Do you conceive God then to be indifferent to our virtues or vices, our obstinacy or repentance?

Middleton. I would not enter into such questions; and indeed I have always been slow to deliver my more serious opinions in conversation, feeling how inadequately any great subject must be discussed within such limits, and how presumptuous it would appear, in one like me, to act as if I had collected all that could be said, or even what could be said best, on the occasion. Neither to run against nor to avoid your interrogatory: there are probably those who believe that, in the expansion and improvement of our minds hereafter, they will be so sensitive to the good or evil we have done on earth as to be rewarded or punished in the most just proportion, without any impulse given to, or suffered by, the First

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* Middleton had the misfortune to disbelieve the efficacy of prayer, and adduces such arguments in support of his opinion as a reasoner so powerful in his perversity would do. Magliabechi is unable to seize the horns of his adversary and bring him at once to the ground; yet the goodness of his cause supplies him with generous and high feeling, and his appeal to the heart of Middleton is more forcible than Middleton's reasoning.

Cause and sole Disposer of things and of events. How rational may be this creed, I leave with the other to speculative men; wishing them to recollect that unseasonable and undue heat must warp the instrument by which alone their speculations can be becomingly and rightly made. If God is sensible to displeasure (which is a modification of pain) at the faults or vices of his creatures, he must suffer at once a myriad times more of it than any of them, and he must endure the same sufferings a myriad times longer.

Magliabechi. This hurts our common faith.

Middleton. Pass over what may offend your faith, common or private; mind only (which I am sure you will do) what may disturb the clearness of your conscience, and impede the activity of your benevolence. Let us never say openly what may make a good man unhappy or unquiet, unless it be to warn him against what we know will make him more so: for instance, if you please, a false friend; or, if you would rather, a teacher who, while he pretends to be looking over the lesson, first slips his hand into his scholar's pocket, then ties him adroitly to his chair by the coat-skirt, then running off with his book tells him to cry out if he dares, promises at last to give him ten better, and if he should be hungry and thirsty bids him never to mind it, for he will eat his dinner for him and drink his wine, and say a Latin grace.

Magliabechi. Ha! now you are stretching out your objections against our church, disregarding what Catholics and Protestants hold in common: our prayers, for instance. I have always found that, when we have carried off the mysteries in triumph, you fall foul upon our miracles and our saints.

Middleton. That is idle.

Magliabechi. I am rejoiced to hear you confess it! You then really have some veneration for those holy men whom the Church hath appointed for our intercessors?

Middleton. Here we come again into the open road, with visible objects before us. I venerate all holy men; but, doubting whether my own prayers to God would alter his mind concerning me, I should yet more betray my deficiency of confidence in his promises, if I trusted a person who is no relative to him rather than his only son; that is, if I trusted the weaker in preference to the stronger, the worse in preference to the better, him who at his birth and after his birth had sins, to him who was born and lived and died with none. Beside, I have no proof whatever that God requires such counsellors and mediators. Must we believe that some men are lying in the grave while others are conversing with him, and busied in turning him from indignation to mercy? We are informed by Holy Writ that all alike are to be awakened by sound of trumpet. What then would become of me if I doubted it? And must I not doubt it if I suppose that some are already at the right hand of God?

Magliabechi. His divine will may order it. We know he promised the repentant thief on the cross that he should sup with him that night in Paradise.

Middleton. He was very merciful to that thief, and has been to many since, who never were upon the cross at all, but who picked pockets under it. What he promised it would be impiety to doubt of his performing; but I never heard of his promise of supper or Paradise to deacon or doctor, to canon or bishop; much less do I believe that they can introduce a friend or dependant. If you would be consistent and go upon certainty, you would pray to the thief; for beyond all controversy he hath secured his place.

Magliabechi. The Church has never canonized him.

Middleton. What! have saints no sanctity until the Church hath given it? Do they mount into heaven from the Vatican? God then does not appoint his own counsellors! They are nominated like the cardinals, and by the same voice!

Magliabechi. After due examination.

Middleton. There indeed lies the difference. I should have more confidence in God's chosen thief.

Magliabechi. You would rather trust a robber than bend before the image of a saint?

Middleton. At least I know that the one was accepted; I am ignorant that the other was.

Magliabechi. This indeed is even worse than what you most abominate, idolatry.

Middleton. I am not one of those who consider idolatry as the most heinous of sins. In the commission of idolatry for a lifetime there is less wickedness than in one malignant action, or one injurious or blighting word.

Magliabechi. O Mr. Middleton! Idolatry is denounced for God's especial vengeance; yet in the blindness of your hearts you Protestants accuse us of this tremendous sin. A thousand times have you been told that we do not venerate what represents, but what is represented.

Middleton. You tell us that you do not worship images, but that you worship in them what they express; be it so: the Pagans did the same, neither better nor worse. What will you answer to the accusation of worshipping a living man? Adoration is offered undisguisedly and openly to priests and monks, however profligate and infamous their lives may have been and be. Every Pope is adored by the Holy College on his elevation.*

Magliabechi. We suppose him to be the representative of Jesus Christ.

Middleton. His legate is also his representative, and a *valet de chambre* the legate's. We may obey one man in place of another, but not adore him. The representative system is good only on this side of adoration.

Magliabechi. Prayer, at all times serviceable, may apparently on some occasions be misapplied. Father Onesimo Sozzifante, on his return from England, presented to me a singular illustration of my remark. He had resided some years in London, as chaplain to the Sardinian envoy; in the first floor of his lodging-house dwelt Mr. Harbottle, a young clergyman, learned, of elegant manners, yet fond of fox-hunting. Inconsistencies like these are found nowhere but in your country: in others, those who have enough for one side of the character have not enough for the opposite; you in general are sufficiently well-stored to squander much of your intellectual property, to neglect much, and to retain much.

Mutual civilities had passed between the two ecclesiastics, and Father Onesimo had received from Mr. Harbottle many invitations to dinner. After the first, he had declined them, deeming the songs and disputations in a slight degree indecorous. The party at this was clerical; and although he represented it as more turbulent in its conclusion than ours are, and although there were many warm disputants, chiefly on jockies or leaders in Parliament, he assured me he was much edified and pleased, when, at the removal of the dishes, each drank devoutly to his old friend. "I thought of you," said he, "my dear Magliabechi, for every one had then before his eyes the complacent guide of his youth. Mine shed a few tears, at which my friends glanced one upon another and smiled; for from an Englishman not even the crucifix can extort a tear."

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* The Emperor of Austria had a difference with the Holy Ghost on the election of Cardinal Della Somagalia to the Popedom. The Holy Ghost had inspired the Holy College to prefer him: the Emperor of Austria disapproved of this inspiration, and set it aside by his *veto.* He knew that there was enough virtue in Italy already, and declared that he wanted no more learning. In proof of the adoration of his present Holiness, the left hand elect of the Holy Ghost, I shall transcribe the very words of the official gazette: —

"Si recò alla Basilica Vaticana per ricevere colà dall' altare della Tribuna l'*adorazione* ed ubbedienza del Sacro Collegio coi solenni riti completi."

Onesimo was at breakfast with Mr. Harbottle, when an Italian ran breathless into the room, kissed the father's hand, and begged him to come instantly and attend a dying man. "We will go together," said Mr. Harbottle. Following their informant, they passed through several lanes and alleys, and at last mounted the stairs of a garret, in which was lying a youth stabbed the night before by a Livornese, about one of those women who excite the most quarrels and deserve the fewest. "Leave me for a moment," said Father Sozzifante, "I must hear his confession."

Hardly had he spoken, when out came all whom kindness or piety or curiosity had collected, and "He is in paradise!" was the exclamation. Mr. Harbottle then entered, and was surprised to hear the worthy confessor ask of the dead man whether he forgave his enemy, and answer in another tone, "Yes, father, from my heart I pardon him."

On returning, he remarked that it appeared strange to him. "Sir," answered Onesimo, "the Catholic Church enjoins forgiveness of injuries." "All churches enjoin the same," replied Mr. Harbottle. "He was unable to speak for himself," said the father, "and therefore I answered for him like a Christian."

Mr. Harbottle, as became him, was silent. On their return homeward they passed by a place, which, if I remember, is called Newgate; a gate above which, it appears, criminals are hanged. At that very hour, the cord was round the neck of a wretch who was repeating the Lord's prayer: the first words they heard were, "Give us this day our daily bread." The father looked at his companion with awe, spreading his fingers on his sleeve, and pressing it until he turned his face toward him. They both pushed on; but, such was the crowd, they could not pass the suppliant before he had uttered, "And lead us not into temptation." The good father stepped before Mr. Harbottle, and, lifting his hands above his ears, would have said something; but his companion cried smartly, "I have seals to my watch, Signor Sozzifante, and there is never a fellow hanged but he makes twenty fit for it: pray walk on."

Fairly out of the crowd, "Poor sinful soul!" said the father, "ere this time thou art in purgatory! Thy daily bread! alas, thou hast eaten the last mouthful! Thy temptation! thou wilt find but few temptations there, I warrant thee, my son! Even these divine words, Mr. Harbottle, may come a little out of season, you perceive."

Mr. Harbottle went home dissatisfied. In about an hour, a friend of his from Oxford called on him. As the weather was warm, the door standing ajar, Sozzifante heard him repeat the history of their adventure, and add: "I will be damned if in my firm persuasion the fellow is not a Jesuit. I never should have thought it. He humbugged me about the dead man, and perhaps got another hanged to quiz me. Would you believe it? he has been three good years in getting up this farce, — the first I have ever caught him, and the last he shall ever catch me, at."

Father Onesimo related to me these occurrences, without a word of reproach or an accent of ill-humor. "The English is a strong language," said he, placidly; "and the people, the least deceivers in the world, are naturally the most indignant at a suspicion of deceit. Mr. Harbottle, who, I dare to say, is ripened ere this time into an exemplary and holy man, was then rather fitter for society than for the Church. Do you know," said he in my ear, although we were alone, "I have seen him pay his laundress (and there was nothing between them) five shillings for one week only! — a sum that serves any cardinal the whole winter-quarter: in April and May indeed, from one thing or other, linen wants washing oftener."

Mr. Middleton, I have proved my candor, I trust, and my freedom from superstition: but he who seeks will find; and perhaps he who in obstinacy closeth his eyes long together will open them just at the moment when he shall meet what he avoided. I will inform you of some facts I know, proving the efficacy of prayer to saints.

Giacomo Pastrani, of Genoa, a citizen not abundant in the gifts of fortune, had, however, in his possession, two most valuable and extremely rare things, — a virtuous wife, and a picture of his patron Saint Giacomo, by Leonardo. The wife had long been ill; her malady was expensive; their substance was diminishing: still no offers had tempted him, although many had been made, to sell the picture. At last, he refused to alienate it otherwise than in favor of a worthy priest, and only as the price of supplications to the Virgin. "Who knows how many it may require?" said the holy man; "and it is difficult to make a prayer which the Virgin has not heard before: perhaps fifty will hardly do. Now fifty crowns would be little for such protection." The invalid, who heard the conversation, wept aloud. "Take it, take it," said the husband, and wept too, lifting it from the nail, and kissing for the last time the glass that covered it. The priest made a genuflexion, and did the same. His supplications prevailed: the wife recovered. The priest, hearing that the picture was very valuable, although the master was yet uncertain, and that in Genoa there was no artist who could clean it, waited for that operation until he went to Milan. Here it was ascertained to be the work of Leonardo, and a dealer gave him four thousand crowns for it. He returned in high glee at what had happened, and communicated it to all his acquaintance. The recovered woman, on hearing it, fell sick again immediately, and died. Wishing to forget the sacrifice of her picture, she had prayed no more to Saint Giacomo; and the Virgin, we may presume, on that powerful saint's intercession, had abandoned her.

Awful fact! Mr. Middleton. Now mark another, perhaps more so. I could overwhelm you with a crowd of witnesses.

Middleton. My dear sir, I do perceive you could.

Magliabechi. The saints in general are more vindictive than our Lady, of whose forbearance, not unaccompanied at last by chastisement, I will relate to you a memorable example. I have indeed no positive proof that he of whom I am about to speak had neglected his prayers to the Virgin; but, from what he certainly did, it is by no means uncharitable to suppose it. He, moreover, by this action, as you will remark, was the cause why others were constrained to omit the salutary act of supplication as they went along.

Middleton. I am in suspense.

Magliabechi. Contiguous to my own villa there is one belonging to Signor Anco-Marzio Natale del Poggio. At the corner of the road, was inserted in the garden-wall an image of the blessed Virgin, with the *bambino* in her arms. Anco-Marzio had been heard to call it, somewhat hastily, an ugly one, and to declare that he would take it down. The threat, however, for several years, was not carried into execution: at last it was accomplished. Behold the consequence! Robbers climbed over the wall (would you believe it?) in the very place whence the effigy had been removed, and upon the very night, too, of its removal: and Anco-Marzio lost not only the whole crop of his lemons, none of which had ever been stolen in former years, but also a pair of knee-buckles, which his maid-servant had taken that occasion of polishing with quick lime, and of which he deeply lamented the loss; not because a crown could scarcely have replaced them, but because they were his father's, and he had bequeathed them by his last will and testament to a very dear old friend.

No reply, no reasoning, can affect this. I know the fact: I visited the spot the next morning; I saw the broken wall; I saw the leaves of the lemon-trees under the vases, without a lemon the size of a filbert on the plants. Who delayed the mad project so long? Who permitted it at last? Who punished it; and for what end? Never afterward did Anco-Marzio pass an effigy of the blessed Virgin, but he kissed it again and again with due reverence, although it were wet with whitewash or paint. Every day did he renew the flowers before the one whose tabernacle he had violated, placing them where he could bend his head over them in humble adoration as he returned at night from his business in the city. It has indeed been suspected that he once omitted this duty; certain it is that he once was negligent in it. He acknowledged to me that, coming home later than usual, and desirous of turning the corner and reaching the villa as soon as might be, it being dusk, he was inclined to execute his duty too perfunctoriously, and encountered, instead of the flowers, a bunch of butchers-broom. None grows thereabout. I do not insist on this: but the lemons, Mr. Middleton! the thieves, Mr. Middleton! the breach in the garden-wall, made for an irreligious purpose, and serving to punish irreligion! Well may you ponder. These things cannot occur among you Englishmen.

Middleton. Excuse me, I pray you, my dear sir! Knowing the people of this country, my wonder was (for indeed I did wonder) that the lemons had never been stolen until that year.

Magliabechi. They never were, I do assure you from my own knowledge, for the last thirty.

Middleton. The greater of the two miracles lies here.

Magliabechi. Of the two miracles? Astonishment and sudden terror make us oftentimes see things doubly: for my part, I declare upon my conscience I can see but one.

Middleton. Nor I either, to speak ingenuously.

Magliabechi. Ha, ha! I comprehend you, and perhaps have to blame my deficiency of judgment in going a single step aside from the main subject of prayer. Now then for it: arm yourself with infidelity; chew the base metal, as boys do while they are whipped, lest they cry out.

Middleton. I am confident, from your present good-humor, that the castigation you meditate to inflict on me will be lenient. He is not commended who casts new opinions for men, but he who chimes in with old.

Magliabechi. The wisest of us, Mr. Middleton, cannot separate the true from the untrue in every thing.

Middleton. It required the hand of God himself, as we are informed, to divide the light from the darkness: we cannot do it, but we can profit by it. What is light we may call so; and why not what is dark?

Magliabechi. Would it fail to excite a discontent in England, if your Parliament should order Christmas to be celebrated in April? Yet Joseph Scaliger, the most learned man that ever existed, and among the least likely to be led astray by theory, has proved, to the satisfaction of many not unlearned, that the nativity of our Lord happened in that month.

Middleton. As the matter is indifferent both in fact and consequences, I would let it stand. No direct or indirect gain, no unworthy end of any kind, can be obtained by its continuance: it renders men neither the more immoral nor the more dastardly; it keeps them neither the more ignorant of their duties nor the more subservient to any kind of usurpation.

Magliabechi. There may be inconveniences in an opposite direction. Pride and arrogance are not the more amiable for the coarseness of their garb. It is better to wrap up religion in a wafer, and swallow it quietly and contentedly, than to extract from it all its bitterness, make wry faces over it, and quarrel with those who decline the delicacy and doubt the utility of the preparation. Our religion, like the vast edifices in which we celebrate it, seems dark when first entered from without. The vision accommodates itself gradually to the place; and we are soon persuaded that we see just as much as we should see.

Middleton. Be it so; but why admit things for which we have no authority, and which we cannot prove? I have left unsaid a great deal of what I might have said. Not being addicted to ridicule, nor capable of sustaining a comic part, I never have spoken a word about *the bread of the angels.*

Magliabechi. God forbid you should!

Middleton. Even your own church, I imagine, will hardly insist that the bread taken by Christians here on earth, in the sacrament of the eucharist, is the ordinary or extraordinary sustenance of angels. For whatever *our* faith may be, whatever supports it may require, *theirs* is perfect and has received its fruit.

Magliabechi. This is specious; so are many of your thoughts: but as I cannot prove the fact, neither can you prove the contrary; and we both perhaps shall act wisely in considering it as a phrase of devotion.

Middleton. I should think so, if the latitude of such phrases had not offered too many fields of battle. But let me hear the miracle with which you threatened me.

Magliabechi. My dear friend, I am now about to lay before you a fact universally known in our city, and which evinces at once the efficacy of prayer, even where it was irrational, and the consequence of neglecting it afterward.

Angiolina Cecci on the day before her nuptials took the sacrament most devoutly, and implored of our Florentine saint, Maria Bagnesi, to whose family she was related, her intervention for three blessings: that she might have one child only; that the *cavaliere serviente*, agreed on equally by her father and her husband, might be faithful to her; and, lastly, that having beautiful hair, it never might turn gray. Now mark me! Assured of success to her suit by a smile on the countenance of the saint, she neglected her prayers and diminished her alms thenceforward. The money-box, which is shaken during the celebration of mass to recompense the priest for the performance of that holy ceremony, was shaken aloud before her day after day, and never drew a *crazia* from her pocket. She turned away her face from it, even when the collection was made to defray the arrears for the beatification of Bagnesi. Nine months after her marriage, she was delivered of a female infant. I am afraid she expressed some discontent at the dispensations of Providence; for within an hour afterward she brought forth another of the same sex. She became furious, intractable, desperate; sent the babes, without seeing them, into the country, as indeed our ladies usually do; and spake slightingly and maliciously of Saint Maria Bagnesi. The consequence was a puerperal fever, which continued several weeks, and was removed at great expense to her family, in masses, wax-candles, and processions. Pictures of the Virgin, wherever they were found by experience to be of more peculiar and more speedy efficacy, were hired at heavy charges from the convents; the cordeliers, to punish her pride and obstinacy, would not carry theirs to the house for less than forty *scudi*.

She recovered, admitted her friends to converse with her, raised herself upon her pillow, and accepted some consolation. At last it was agreed by her physicians that she might dress herself and eat brains and liver. Probably she was ungrateful for a benefit so signal and unexpected; since no sooner did her *cameriera* comb her hair, than off it came by the handful. She then perceived her error; but, instead of repairing it, abandoned herself to anguish and lamentation. Her *cavaliere serviente*, finding her bald, meagre, and eyesore, renewed his addresses to the mother. The husband, with two daughters to provide for, — the only two ever reared out of the many entrusted to the same peasants, — counted over again and again the dowry, shook his head, sighed piteously, and, hanging on the image of Maria Bagnesi a silver heart of five ounces, which, knowing it to have been stolen, he bought at a cheap rate of a Jew on Ponte Vecchio, calculated that the least of impending evils was to purchase an additional bed just large enough for one.

You ponder, Mr. Middleton; you appear astonished at these visitations; you know my sincerity; you fully credit me; I cannot doubt a moment of your conviction: I perceive it marked strongly on your countenance.

Middleton. Indeed, M. Magliabechi, I now discover the validity of prayer to saints, and the danger of neglecting them: recommend me in yours to Saint Maria Bagnesi.*

VI. MILTON AND ANDREW MARVEL.†

Milton. Friend Andrew, I am glad to hear that you amuse yourself in these bad times by the composition of a comedy, and that you have several plans in readiness for others. Now let me advise you to copy the better part of what the Greeks and Romans called the *old*, and to introduce songs and music, which, suitable as they are to tragedy, are more so to the sister Muse. Furthermore, I could desire to see a piece modelled in every part on the Athenian scheme, with the names and characters and manners of times past. For surely you would not add to the immorality of the age, by representing any thing of the present mode upon the theatre. Although we are more abundant in follies, which rather than vices are the ground-work of comedy, we experience less disgust in touching those of other times than of our own; and in a drama the most ancient would have the most novelty. I know that all the periods and all the nations of the world united, have less variety of character than we find in this one city; yet, as you write to amuse yourself and a few learned friends, I am persuaded you would gladly walk out of it for once, and sit down to delineate a Momus or a Satyr, with at least as much complacency as a vulgar fopling or a party-colored buffoon.

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* Saints in general make a great quantity of oil disappear; but Saint Maria Bagnesi, on the contrary, made a good deal of it come suddenly out of nothing; as will be evident to whoever reads *Breve Ragguaglio della produzione d'oglio sequita o scoperta il di* 30 *Maggio* 1806, *nel venerabile monastero degli Angele e S. Maria-Maddalena de' Pazzi, ad intercessione della B. M. Bartolommea Bagnesi, Virg. Fior. del Terz. Ordine di S. Domenico. Verificata autenticamente per sentenza della Curia Arcivescovite Fiorentina del di* 10 *Decembre* 1806. The quantity was not stinted to a flask or two; but filled up to the brim an earthen vessel containing six or seven barrels, which, by order of the Queen of Etruria, sister of Ferdinand VII. of Spain, was granted in small quantities to the faithful. The minutest portion of it rubbed on the body, as the book attests, with the simple invocation of Saint Maria Bagnesi, produced its own miracle. The courtiers were deeply impressed with this awful verity; so were some in the religious orders; to others it only gave (as oil of old) a cheerful countenance; for Saint Maria Bagnesi did not belong to them.

† Milton had given his opinion in full on government and religion, and on many kinds of poetry; what he may be supposed to have thought on comedy was wanting.

O Andrew! albeit our learning raiseth up against us many enemies among the low, and more among the powerful, yet doth it invest us with grand and glorious privileges, and confer on us a largeness of beatitude. We enter our studies, and enjoy a society which we alone can bring together; we raise no jealousy by conversing with one in preference to another; we give no offence to the most illustrious by questioning him as long as we will, and leaving him as abruptly. Diversity of opinion raises no tumult in our presence: each interlocutor stands before us, speaks or is silent, and we adjourn or decide the business at our leisure. Nothing is past which we desire to be present; and we enjoy by anticipation, somewhat like the power which I imagine we shall possess hereafter of sailing on a wish from world to world. Surely you would turn away as far as possible from the degraded state of our country; you would select any vices and follies for description, rather than those that jostle us in our country-walks, return with us to our house-doors, and smirk on us in silks and satins at our churches.

Come, my old friend, take down your *hortus siccus.* The live plants you would gather do both stink and sting: prythee leave them to wither or to rot, or to be plucked and collated by more rustic hands.

Marvel. I entertain an utter contempt for the populace, whether in robes or tatters; whether the face be bedaubed with cinnabar or with dirt from the alleys and shops. It appears to me, however, that there is as much difference between tragedy and comedy as between the heavens and the clouds ; and that comedy draws its life from its mobility. We must take manners as we find them, and copy from the individual, not the species ; into which fault Menander fell and seduced his followers. The characters whereon he raised his glory are trivial and contemptible.

> Dum fallax servus, durus pater, improba lena
> Vivent, dum meretrix blanda, Menander erit.

His wisdom towered high above them, and he clothed with smiles what Euripides charged with spleen. The beauty of his moral sentences was hurtful to the spirit of comedy ; and I am convinced, that, if we could recover his works, we should find them both less facetious and less dramatic than those of Plautus. Once, by way of experiment, I attempted to imitate his manner, as far as I could judge of it from the fragments we possess. I will give you a specimen : it is the best I have :—

> "Friendship, in each successive stage of life,
> As we approach him, varies to the view :
> In youth he wears the face of Love himself,
> Of Love without his arrows and his wings ;
> Soon afterward with Bacchus and with Pan
> Thou findest him, or hearest him resign
> To some dog-pastor by the quiet fire
> (With much good-will and jocular adieu)
> His age-worn mule or broken-hearted steed.
> Fly not, as thou wert wont, to his embrace,
> Lest, after one long yawning gaze, he swear
> Thou art the best good-fellow in the world,
> But he had quite forgotten thee, by Jove !
> Or laughter wag his newly bearded chin
> At recollection of his childish hours.
> But wouldst thou see, young man, his latest form,
> When e'en this laughter, e'en this memory fails ?
> Look at yon fig-tree statue, golden once,
> As all would deem it ; rottenness falls out
> At every little chink the worms have made,
> And, if thou triest to lift it up again,
> It breaks upon thee. Leave it, touch it not ;
> Its very lightness would encumber thee :
> Come, thou hast seen it ; 'tis enough ; away !"

Milton. This indeed is in the manner I would propose.

Marvel. Yet if it were spoken on our stage, I should be condemned as a man ignorant of the art; and justly too: for it accords not with its complexion. Inevitable events and natural reflections, but reflections not exhibited before and events not expected, please me better than the most demonstrable facts, the most sober truths, the most clever improbabilities, and the most acute repartees. In comedy, we should oftener raise reflections than present them.

Now for plot.

Intricacy was always held necessary on the modern stage, and the more so when delicacy was the least. It was, however, so difficult to make the audience keep watch and ward for it, and to command an uninterrupted attention for five whole acts, that many of the best writers, from Terence to the present age, have combined two plots; hoping that what is twisted together will untwist together, and leaving a great deal to the goodness of Providence, and to the faith and charity of their fellow-creatures.

Milton. True enough. Your plotters bring many great changes into many whole families, and sometimes into several and distant countries, within the day; and, what is more difficult and incredible, send off all parties well satisfied, excepting one scape-goat. For my own share, I am content with seeing a fault wittily rebuked and checked effectually; and think *that* surprising enough, considering the time employed in doing it, without the formation of attachments, the begetting or finding of children, bickerings, buffetings, deaths, marriages, distresses, wealth again, love again, whims and suspicions, shaking heads, and shaking hands. These things are natural, I confess it; but one would rather breathe between them, and perhaps one would think it no bad husbandry to put some of them off until another season. The combination of them, marvellous as it appears, is less difficult to contrive than to credit.

Marvel. I have always been an idle man, and have read or attended the greater part of the plays that are extant; and will venture to affirm, that, exclusive of Shakspeare's and some Spanish pieces never represented nor translated, there are barely half-a-dozen plots among them, comic and tragic: so that it is evidently a much easier matter to run over the usual variations, than to keep entirely in another tune, and to raise up no recollections. Both in tragedies and comedies the changes are pretty similar, and nearly in the same places. You perceive the turns and windings of the road a mile before you, and you know exactly the precipice down which the hero or heroine must fall. You can discover with your naked eye who does the mischief, and who affords the help; where the assassin bursts forth with the dagger, and where the old gentleman shakes the crabstick over the shoulder of his dissolute nephew.

Milton. I do not wish direction-posts to perplexities and intrigues: I oppose this agrarian law, this general inclosure act. I would not attempt to square the circle of poetry; and am avowedly a non-juror to the doctrine of grace and predestination in the drama.

Marvel. In my project, one action leads to and brings about another, naturally, but not necessarily. The event is the confusion of the evil-doer, whose machinations are the sole means of accomplishing what their motion seemed calculated to thwart and overthrow. No character is introduced that doth not tend toward the development of the plot; no one is merely prompter to a witticism, or master of the ceremonies to a repartee.

Characters in general are made subservient to the plot: here the plot is made subservient to the characters. All are real. I have only invited them to meet, and bestowed on them those abilities for conversation without which a comedy might be very natural, but would not possess the nature of a comedy. I expose only what arises from the headiness of unruly passions, or is precipitated by the folly that verges upon vice. This exposure is in the corner of a room, not in the stocks nor in the market-place. Comedy with me sits in an easy chair, as Menander is represented by the statuary; for it is as possible to be too busy on the scenic theatre as it is on the theatre of life. To those who admire the double plot and the machinery of the rope-walk, I only say, "Go to my betters, whom you have so long neglected; carry off from them as much as you can bear: you are then welcome to rip up my sheet, and to sew a scene in wherever the needle will go through. In this manner, the good may be made acceptable by the new, and the new can be no loser by the good."

Milton. You say nothing about the chorus. I have introduced it, you know, in my *Samson Agonistes*, and intend to bring it forward in my *Macbeth*.

Marvel. Dear John! thou art lucky in having escaped two Stuarts; and luckier wilt thou be if thou escapest one Macbeth. Contend with Homer, but let Shakspeare rest. Drop that work; prythee drop it for ever: thou mayest appear as high as he is (for who can measure either of you?) if thou wilt only stand some way off.

In tragedy, the choruses were grave people, called upon, or ready without it, to give advice and consolation in cases of need. To set them singing and moralizing amid the dolefullest emergencies, when the poet should be *reporting progress*, is like sticking a ballad upon a turnstile to hasten folks on. The comic poet called out his regular chorus, in imitation of the tragic, till the genius of Menander took a middle flight between Aristophanes and Euripides. Comedy had among the ancients her ovations, but not her triumphs.

Milton. Menander's form, which the Romans and French have imitated, pleases me less than the older. He introduced better manners; but, employing no variety of verse, and indulging in few sallies of merriment, I incline to believe that he more frequently instructed than entertained. In the joyous glades of Aristophanes, the satyrs did not dance without the nymphs, and in the rich variety of the festival the purest and most refreshing water was mixed with the most sparkling wine. If it were not tedious to continue or take up again a metaphor, I should say that all the fruit of Jonson, and those like him, is mashed and mealy; and, where there is any flavor at all, it is the strong flavor of fermentation or of mustiness.

The verse itself of Aristophanes is a dance of Bacchanals: one cannot read it with composure. He had, however, but little true wit, whatever may be asserted to the contrary. There is abundance of ribaldry, and of that persecution by petulance which the commonalty call banter.

Marvel. He takes delight in mocking and ridiculing the manner of Euripides. In my opinion, if a modern may form one upon the subject, he might with his ingenuity have seized more points to let his satire lighten on, and have bent them to his purpose with more dexterity and address.

Milton. His ridicule on the poetry is misplaced, on the manners is inelegant. Euripides was not less wise than

Socrates, nor less tender than Sappho. There is a tenderness which elevates the genius: there is also a tenderness which corrupts the heart. The latter, like every impurity, is easy to communicate; the former is difficult to conceive. Strong minds alone possess it; virtuous minds alone value it. I hold it abominable to turn into derision what is excellent. To render undesirable what ought to be desired is the most mischievous and diabolical of malice. To exhibit him as contemptible, who ought according to the conscience of the exhibiter to be respected and revered, is a crime the more odious, as it can be committed only by violence to his feelings, against the reclamations of Justice, and among the struggles of Virtue. And what is the tendency of this brave exploit? To cancel the richest legacy that ever was bequeathed to him, and to prove his own bastardy in relation to the most illustrious of his species. If it is disgraceful to demolish or obliterate a tombstone over the body of the most obscure among the dead, if it is an action for which a boy would be whipped as guilty of the worst idleness and mischief, what is it to overturn the monument that Gratitude has erected to Genius, and to break the lamp that is lighted by Devotion over against the image of Love? The writings of the wise are the only riches our posterity cannot squander: why depreciate them? To Antiquity again; but afar from Aristophanes.

Marvel. Our admiration of Antiquity is in part extraneous from her merits; yet even this part, strange as the assertion may appear, is well founded. We learn many things from the ancients which it cost them no trouble to teach, and upon which they employed no imagination, no learning, no time. Those among us who have copied them have not succeeded. To produce any effect on morals or on manners, or indeed to attract any attention, — which, whatever be the pretext, is the principal if not the only aim of most writers, and certainly of all the comic, — we must employ the language and consult the habits of our age. We may introduce a song without retrospect to the old comedy; a moral sentence, without authority from the new. The characters, even on their improved and purified stage, were, we know, of so vulgar and uncleanly a cast, that, with all their fine reflections, there was something like the shirt of Lazarus patched with the purple of Dives.

Do not imagine I am a detractor from the glory of our teachers, from their grace, their elegance, and their careful weeding away of tiny starveling thoughts, that higher and more succulent may have room.

Milton. No, Marvel, no. Between their poetry and ours you perceive as great a difference as between a rose and a dandelion. There is, if I may express myself so, without pursuing a metaphor till it falls exhausted at my feet, a sort of refreshing odor flying off it perpetually; not enough to oppress or to satiate; nothing is beaten or bruised; nothing smells of the stalk; the flower itself is half concealed by the Genius of it hovering round. Write on the same principles as guided them.

Marvel. Yes; but I would not imitate them further. I will not be pegged down to any plot, nor follow any walk, however well-rolled, where the persons of the drama cannot consistently lead the way.

Milton. Reasonable enough: but why should not both comedy and tragedy be sometimes so disciplined as may better fit them for our closets? I allow that their general intention is for action: it is also the nature of odes to be accompanied by voices and instruments. I only would suggest to you that a man of learning, with a genius suited to comedy, may as easily found it upon antiquity as the tragedian of equal abilities his tragedy; and that the one might be made as acceptable to the study as the other to the stage. I would not hamper you with rules and precedents. Comply with no other laws or limits than such as are necessary to the action. There may be occasion for songs, and there may not; beside, a poet may be capable of producing a good comedy who is incapable of composing a tolerable stanza; and, on the other hand, Pindar himself might have been lost in a single scene.

Marvel. True: but tell me, friend John, are you really serious in your proposal of interspersing a few antiquated words, that my comedy may be acceptable to the readers of Plautus and Terence? This I hear.

Milton. I have, on several occasions, been a sufferer by the delivery of my sentiments to a friend. Antiquated words, used sparingly and characteristically, give often a force, and always a gravity, to composition. It is not every composition that admits them: a comedy *may* in one character, but charily and choicely.

There is in Plautus a great fund of language and of wit: he is far removed from our Shakspeare, but resembles him more than any other of the ancients. In reading him and Terence, my delight arises not so materially from the aptitude of character and expression, as from a clear and unobstructed insight into the feelings and manners of those ancient times, and an admission into the conversations to which Scipio and Lælius attended.

You will carefully observe the proper and requisite unities, not according to the wry rigor of our neighbors, who never take up an old idea without some extravagance in its application. We would not draw out a conspiracy in the presence of those who are conspired against; nor hold it needful to call a council of postilions, before we decide on the distance we may allow to our heroes between the acts. Let others treat them as monkeys and parrots, loving to hear them chatter, tied by the leg. The music renders a removal of twenty or thirty miles, during the action, probable enough, unless you take out your watch and look upon it while you are listening. In that case, although you oblige the poet to prove the pedigree of the horses, and to bring witnesses that such horses might go thus far without drawing bit, your reasons are insufficient by fifty minutes or an hour.

The historical dramas of Shakspeare should be designated by that name only, and not be called tragedies, lest persons who reflect little (and how few reflect much!) should try them by the rules of Aristoteles; which would be as absurd as to try a gem upon a touch-stone. Shakspeare, in these particularly, but also in the rest, can only be relished by a people which retains its feelings and character in perfection. The French, more than any other, are transmuted by the stream that runs over them, like the baser metals. Beautiful poems, in dialogue too, may be composed on the greater part of a life, if that life be eventful, and if there be a proper choice of topics. *Votivâ veluti depicta tabellâ.*

No other than Shakspeare hath ever yet been able to give unceasing interest to similar pieces; but he has given it amply to such as understand him. Sometimes his levity (we hear) is misplaced. Human life is exhibited not only in its calamities and its cares, but in the gay unguarded hours of ebullient and confident prosperity; and we are the more deeply interested in the reverses of those whose familiarity we have long enjoyed, and whose festivity we have recently partaken.

Marvel. Now, what think you about the number of acts?

Milton. There is no reason, in nature or in art, why a drama should occupy five. Be assured, my friend Andrew, the fifth-act men will hereafter be thought as absurd as the fifth-monarchy men. The number of acts should be optional, like the number of scenes, and the division of them should equally be subordinate to the convenience of the poet in the procession of his events. In respect to duration, nothing is requisite or reasonable but that it should not loiter nor digress, and that it should not exhaust the patience nor disappoint the expectation of the audience. Dramatists have gone to work in this business with so much less of wisdom than of system, that I question, when they say a comedy or tragedy in *five acts*, whether they should not rather say in *five scenes;* whether, in fact, the scenes should not designate the divisions, and the acts the subdivisions; for the *scene* usually changes to constitute a new *act*, and when a fresh *actor* enters we usually call it a new *scene.* I do not speculate on any one carrying the identity of place strictly throughout a whole performance, least of all a tragedy, unless for the purpose of ridiculing some late French critics. As a tragedy must consist of opposite counsels and unforeseen events, if the author should exhibit his whole action in one hall or chamber, he would be laughed to scorn. Comedy is not formed to astonish: she neither expects nor wishes great changes. Let her argue rarely; let her remark lightly: if she reasons too well, her audience will leave her, and reflect upon it. Those generally are the most temperate who have large and well-stored cellars. You have every thing at home, Andrew, and need not step out of your way. Those show that they possess much who hold much back.

Marvel. Be not afraid of me: I will not push my characters forward, and make them stare most one upon another when they are best acquainted. The union of wisdom with humor is unexpected enough for me. I would rather see it than the finest piece of arras slit asunder, or the richest screen in Christendom overturned; than the cleverest trick that was ever played among the scenes, or than a marriage that should surprise me like an Abyssinian's with a Laplander.

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VII. LORD BACON AND RICHARD HOOKER.

Bacon. Hearing much of your worthiness and wisdom, Master Richard Hooker, I have besought your comfort and consolation in this my too heavy affliction: for we often do stand in need of hearing what we know full well, and our own balsams must be poured into our breasts by another's hand. As the air at our doors is sometimes more expeditious in removing pain and heaviness from the body than the most far-fetched remedies would be, so the voice alone of a neighborly and friendly visitant may be more effectual in assuaging our sorrows, than whatever is most forcible in rhetoric and most recondite in wisdom. On these occasions we cannot put ourselves in a posture to receive the latter, and still less are we at leisure to look into the corners of our store-room, and to uncurl the leaves of our references. As for Memory, who, you may tell me, would save us the trouble, she is footsore enough in all conscience with me, without going further back. Withdrawn as you live from court and courtly men, and having ears occupied by better reports than such as are flying about me, yet haply so hard a case as mine, befalling a man heretofore not averse from the studies in which you take delight, may have touched you with some concern.

Hooker. I do think, my Lord of Verulam, that, unhappy as you appear, God in sooth has foregone to chasten you, and that the day which in his wisdom he appointed for your trial, was the very day on which the King's Majesty gave unto your ward and custody the great seal of his English realm. And yet perhaps it may be — let me utter it without offence — that your features and stature were from that day forward no longer what they were before. Such an effect do power and rank and office produce even on prudent and religious men.

A hound's whelp howleth, if you pluck him up above where he stood: man, in much greater peril from falling, doth rejoice. You, my Lord, as befitted you, are smitten and contrite, and do appear in deep wretchedness and tribulation to your servants and those about you; but I know that there is always a balm which lies uppermost in these afflictions, and that no heart rightly softened can be very sore.

Bacon. And yet, Master Richard, it is surely no small matter to lose the respect of those who looked up to us for countenance; and the favor of a right learned king; and, O Master Hooker, such a power of money! But money is mere dross. I should always hold it so, if it possessed not two qualities; that of making men treat us reverently, and that of enabling us to help the needy.

Hooker. The respect, I think, of those who respect us for what a fool can give and a rogue can take away, may easily be dispensed with; but it is indeed a high prerogative to help the needy; and when it pleases the Almighty to deprive us of it, let us believe that he foreknoweth our inclination to negligence in the charge entrusted to us, and that in his mercy he hath removed from us a most fearful responsibility.

Bacon. I know a number of poor gentlemen to whom I could have rendered aid.

Hooker. Have you examined and sifted their worthiness?

Bacon. Well and deeply.

Hooker. Then must you have known them long before your adversity, and while the means of succoring them were in your hands.

Bacon. You have circumvented and entrapped me, Master Hooker. Faith! I am mortified: you the schoolman, I the schoolboy!

Hooker. Say not so, my Lord. Your years indeed are fewer than mine, by seven or thereabout; but your knowledge is far higher, your experience richer. Our wits are not always in blossom upon us. When the roses are overcharged and languid, up springs a spike of rue. Mortified on such an occasion? God forefend it! But again to the business. — I should never be over-penitent for my neglect of needy gentlemen who have neglected themselves much worse. They have chosen their profession with its chances and contingencies. If they had protected their country by their courage or adorned it by their studies, they would have merited, and under a king of such learning and such equity would have received in some sort, their reward. I look upon them as so many old cabinets of ivory and tortoise-shell, scratched, flawed, splintered, rotten, defective both within and without, hard to unlock, insecure to lock up again, unfit to use.

Bacon. Methinks it beginneth to rain, Master Richard. What if we comfort our bodies with a small cup of wine, against the ill-temper of the air. Wherefore, in God's name, are you affrightened?

Hooker. Not so, my Lord; not so.

Bacon. What then affects you?

Hooker. Why, indeed, since your Lordship interrogates me — I looked, idly and imprudently, into that rich buffet; and I saw, unless the haze of the weather has come into the parlor, or my sight is the worse for last night's reading, no fewer than six silver pints. Surely, six tables for company are laid only at coronations.

Bacon. There are many men so squeamish that forsooth they would keep a cup to themselves, and never communicate it to their nearest and best friend; a fashion which seems to me offensive in an honest house, where no disease of ill repute ought to be feared. We have lately, Master Richard, adopted strange fashions; we have run into the wildest luxuries. The Lord Leicester, I heard it from my father — God forefend it should ever be recorded in our history! — when he entertained Queen Elizabeth at Kenilworth Castle, laid before her Majesty a fork of pure silver. I the more easily credit it, as Master Thomas Coriatt doth vouch for having seen the same monstrous sign of voluptuousness at Venice. We are surely the especial favorites of Providence, when such wantonness hath not melted us quite away. After this portent, it would otherwise have appeared incredible that we should have broken the Spanish Armada.

Pledge me: hither comes our wine.

[*To the Servant.*

Dolt! villain! is not this the beverage I reserve for myself?

The blockhead must imagine that Malmsey runs in a stream under the ocean, like the Alpheus. Bear with me, good Master Hooker, but verily I have little of this wine, and I keep it as a medicine for my many and growing infirmities. You are healthy at present: God in his infinite mercy long maintain you so! Weaker drink is more wholesome for you.

The lighter ones of France are best accommodated by Nature to our constitutions, and therefore she has placed them so within our reach that we have only to stretch out our necks, in a manner, and drink them from the vat. But this Malmsey, this Malmsey, flies from centre to circumference, and makes youthful blood boil.

Hooker. Of a truth, my knowledge in such matters is but spare. My Lord of Canterbury once ordered part of a goblet, containing some strong Spanish wine, to be taken to me from his table when I dined by sufferance with his chaplains, and, although a most discreet prudent man as befitteth his high station, was not so chary of my health as your Lordship. Wine is little to be trifled with, physic less. The Cretans, the brewers of this Malmsey, have many aromatic and powerful herbs among them. On their mountains, and notably on Ida, grows that dittany which works such marvels, and which perhaps may give activity to this hot medicinal drink of theirs. I would not touch it, knowingly: an unregarded leaf, dropped into it above the ordinary, might add such puissance to the concoction as almost to break the buckles in my shoes; since we have good and valid authority that the wounded hart, on eating thereof, casts the arrow out of his haunch or entrails, although it stuck a palm deep.

Bacon. When I read of such things I doubt them. Religion and politics belong to God, and to God's vicegerent the King; we must not touch upon them unadvisedly: but if I could procure a plant of dittany on easy terms, I would persuade my apothecary and my gamekeeper to make some experiments.

Hooker. I dare not distrust what grave writers have declared, in matters beyond my knowledge.

Bacon. Good Master Hooker, I have read many of your reasonings; and they are admirably well sustained: added to which, your genius has given such a strong current to your language as can come only from a mighty elevation and a most abundant plenteousness. Yet forgive me, in God's name, my worthy Master, if you descried in me some expression of wonder at your simplicity. We are all weak and vulnerable somewhere: common men in the higher parts; heroes, as was feigned of Achilles, in the lower. You would define to a hair's breadth the qualities, states, and dependencies of Principalities, Dominations, and Powers; you would be unerring about the Apostles and the Churches ; and 'tis marvellous how you wander about a potherb!

Hooker. I know my poor weak intellects, most noble Lord, and how scantily they have profited by my hard painstaking. Comprehending few things, and those imperfectly, I say only what others have said before, wise men and holy ; and if, by passing through my heart into the wide world around me, it pleaseth God that this little treasure shall have lost nothing of its weight and pureness, my exultation is then the exultation of humility. Wisdom consisteth not in knowing many things, nor even in knowing them thoroughly ; but in choosing and in following what conduces the most certainly to our lasting happiness and true glory. And this wisdom, my Lord of Verulam, cometh from above.

Bacon. I have observed among the well-informed and the ill-informed nearly the same quantity of infirmities and follies : those who are rather the wiser keep them separate, and those who are wisest of all keep them better out of sight. Now examine the sayings and writings of the prime philosophers ; and you will often find them, Master Richard, to be untruths made to resemble truths. The business with them is to approximate as nearly as possible, and not to touch it : the goal of the charioteer is *evitata fervidis rotis*, as some poet saith. But we who care nothing for chants and cadences, and have no time to catch at applauses, push forward over stones and sands straightway to our object. I have persuaded men, and shall persuade them for ages, that I possess a wide range of thought unexplored by others, and first thrown open by me, with many fair enclosures of choice and abstruse knowledge. I have incited and instructed them to examine all subjects of useful and rational inquiry ; few that occurred to me have I myself left untouched or untried : one however hath almost escaped me, and surely one worth the trouble.

Hooker. Pray, my Lord, if I am guilty of no indiscretion, what may it be?

Bacon. Francis Bacon.

Lest it be thought that authority is wanting for the strong expression of Hooker on the effects of dittany, the reader is referred to the curious treatise of Plutarch on the reasoning faculties of animals, in which (near the end) he asks, " Who instructed deer wounded by the Cretan arrow to seek for dittany? on the tasting of which herb the bolts fall immediately from their bodies."

VIII. SAMUEL JOHNSON AND JOHN * HORNE (TOOKE).

Tooke. Doctor Johnson, I rejoice in the opportunity, late as it presents itself, of congratulating you on the completion of your great undertaking: my bookseller sent me your *Dictionary* the day it came from the press, and it has exercised ever since a good part of my time and attention.

Johnson. Who are you, sir?

Tooke. My name is Horne.

Johnson. What is my *Dictionary*, sir, to you?

Tooke. A treasure.

Johnson. Keep it then at home and to yourself, sir, as you would any other treasure, and talk no more about it than you would about that. You have picked up some knowledge, sir; but out of dirty places. What man in his senses would fix his study on the hustings? When a gentleman takes it into his head to conciliate the rabble, I deny his discretion and I doubt his honesty. Sir, what can you have to say to me?

Tooke. Doctor, my studies have led me some little way into etymology, and I am interested in whatever contributes to the right knowledge of our language.

Johnson. Sir, have you read our old authors?

Tooke. Almost all of them that are printed and extant.

Johnson. Prodigious! do you speak truth?

Tooke. To the best of my belief.

Johnson. Sir, how could you, a firebrand tossed about by the populace, find leisure for so much reading?

Tooke. The number of English books printed before the accession of James the First is smaller than you appear to imagine; and the manuscripts, I believe, are not numerous: certainly in the libraries of our Universities they are scanty. I wish you had traced in your preface all the changes made in the orthography these last three centuries, for which about five additional pages would have been sufficient. The first attempt to purify and reform the tongue was made by John

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* J. Horne assumed the name of Tooke after the supposed date of this Conversation.

Lyly, in a book entitled *Euphues and his England*,* and a most fantastical piece of fustian it is. This author has often been confounded with William Lily, a better grammarian, and better known. Benjamin Jonson did somewhat, and could have done more. Although our governors have taken no pains either to improve our language or to extend it, none in Europe is spoken habitually by so many. The French boast the universality of theirs; yet the Germans, the Spaniards, and the Italians may contend with them on this ground: for as the Dutch is a dialect of the German, so is the Portuguese of the Spanish, and not varying in more original words than the Milanese and Neapolitan from the Tuscan. The *lingua franca*, which pervades the coasts of the Mediterranean, the Ionian, and the Ægean seas, is essentially Italian. The languages of the two most extensive empires in Europe are confined to the fewest people. There are not thirteen millions who speak Turkish, nor fifteen who speak Russian, though branches of the Sclavonic are scattered far. If any respect had been had to the literary glory of our country, whereon much of its political is and ever will be dependent, many millions more would at this time be speaking in English; and the Irish, the Welsh, and the Canadians, like the Danes and Saxons, would have forgotten they were a conquered people.

We should be anxious both to improve our language and to extend it. England ought to have no colony in which it will not be soon the only one spoken. Nations may be united by identity of speech more easily than by identity of laws; for identity of laws only shows the conquered that they are bound *to* another people, while identity of speech shows them that they are bound *with* it. There is no firm conjunction but this; none that does not retain on it the scar and seam, and often with much soreness.

Johnson. So far, I believe, I may agree with you, and remain a good subject.

Tooke. Let us now descend from generalities to particulars. Our spelling hath undergone as many changes as the French, and worse.

Johnson. And because it hath undergone many, you would make it undergo more! There is a fastidiousness in the use of language that indicates an atrophy of mind. We must take words as the world presents them to us, without looking at the root. If we grubbed under this and laid it bare, we should leave no room for our thoughts to lie evenly, and every expression would be constrained and cramped. We should scarcely find a metaphor in the purest author that is not false or imperfect, nor could we imagine one ourselves that would not be stiff and frigid. Take now, for instance, a phrase in common use. *You are rather late.* Can any thing seem plainer? Yet *rather*, as you know, meant originally *earlier*, being the comparative of *rathe:* the "rathe primrose" of the poet recalls it. We cannot say, *You are sooner late:* but who is so troublesome and silly as to question the propriety of saying, *You are rather late?* We likewise say, *bad orthography*, and *false orthography:* how can there be false or bad *right-spelling?*

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* Among the works of Charles de St. Pierre is *Projet pour réformer l'Orthographie des Langues de l'Europe.* He must not be confounded with Barnardin de St. Pierre, fanciful as is the treatise.

Tooke. I suspect there are more of these inadvertencies in our language than in any other.

Johnson. Sir, our language is a very good language.

Tooke. Were it not, I should be less solicitous to make it better.

Johnson. *You* make it better, sir!

Tooke. By reverencing the authority of the learned, by exposing the corruptions of the ignorant, and by reclaiming what never ought to have been obsolete.

Johnson. Sir, the task is hopeless: little can be done now.

Tooke. And because little can be done, must we do nothing? Because with all our efforts we are imperfect, may not we try to be virtuous? Many of the anomalies in our language can be avoided or corrected: if many shall yet remain, something at least will have been done for elegance and uniformity.

Johnson. I hate your innovations.

Tooke. I not only hate them, but would resist and reject them, if I could. It is only such writers as you that can influence the public by your authority and example.

Johnson. Sir, if the best writer in England dared to spell three words differently from his contemporaries, and as Milton spelled them, he would look about in vain for a publisher.

Tooke. Yet Milton is most careful and exact in his spelling, and his ear is as correct as his learning. His language would continue to be the language of his country, had it not been for the Restoration.

Johnson. I have patience, sir! I have patience, sir! Pray go on.

Tooke. I will take advantage of so much affability; and I hope that patience, like other virtues, may improve by exercise.

On the return of Charles from the Continent, some of his followers may really have lost their native idiom, or at least may have forgotten the graver and solider parts of it; for many were taken over in their childhood. On their return to England, nothing gave such an air of fashion as imperfection in English: it proved high breeding, it displayed the court and loyalty. Home-bred English ladies soon acquired it from their noble and brave gallants; and it became the language of the Parliament, of the Church, and of the Stage. Between the last two places was pretty equally distributed all the facetiousness left among us.

Johnson. Keep clear of the Church, sir, and stick to language.

Tooke. Punctually will I obey each of your commands.

Johnson. Did South and Cowley and Waller fall into this slough?

Tooke. They could not keep others from it. I peruse their works with pleasure; but South, the greatest of them, is negligent and courtly in his spelling, and sometimes, although not often, more gravely incorrect.

Johnson. And pray now, what language do you like?

Tooke. The best in all countries is that which is spoken by intelligent women, of too high rank for petty affectation, and of too much request in society for deep study. Cicero praises more than one such among the Romans; the number was greater among the Greeks. We have no writer in our language so pure as Madame de Sévigné. Indeed, we must acknowledge that the French far excel us in purity of style. When have we seen, or when can we expect, such a writer as Le Sage? In our days there is scarcely an instance of a learned or unlearned man who has written gracefully, excepting your friend Goldsmith and (if your modesty will admit my approaches) yourself. In your *Lives of the Poets*, you have laid aside the sceptre of Jupiter for the wand of Mercury, and have really called up with it some miserable ghosts from the dead.

Johnson. Sir, I desire no compliments.

Tooke. Before, I offered not my compliment but my tribute: I dreaded a repulse; but I little expected to see, as I do, the finger of Aurora on your face.

Johnson. If the warmth of the room is enough to kindle your poetry, well may it possess a slight influence on my cheek. The learned men, I presume, are superseded by your public orators.

Tooke. Our parliamentary speakers of most eminence are superficial in scholarship, as we understand the word, and by no means dangerously laden with any species of knowledge. Burke is the most eloquent and philosophical of them; Fox the readiest at reply, the stoutest debater, the acutest disputant.

Johnson. Rebels! but what you say of their knowledge is the truth. I have said it of one party, and I know it of the other, else I would trounce you for your asseveration.

Tooke. You yourself induced me to make the greater part of my remarks; more important, as being on things more important, than transitory men: such is language.

Johnson. How, sir, did I?

Tooke. By having recommended in some few instances a correcter mode of spelling. Bentley and Hall and Dryden, though sound writers, are deficient in authority with me; when, for example, they write *incompatible* for *incompetible:* we want both words, but we must be careful not to confound and misapply them. Dryden and Roscommon formed a design of purifying and fixing the language: neither of them knew its origin or principles, or was intimately or indeed moderately versed in our earlier authors, of whom Chaucer was probably the only one they had perused. It is pretended that they abandoned the design from the unquietness of the times: as if the times disturbed them in their studies, leaving them peace enough for poetry, but not enough for philology!

Johnson. And are you, sir, more acute, more learned, or more profound? What! because at one time our English books were scanty, you would oppose the scanty to the many, with all the rashness and inconsistency of a republican.

Tooke. Bearing all your reproofs and reproaches with equanimity and submission, I converse with you on this subject because you have given up much time to it: with another I should decline the discussion. I am hopeful of gaining some information and of suggesting some subject for inquiry. Illiterate, inconsiderate, irreverent, and overweening men will be always disregarded by me. Like children and clowns, if they see a throne or a judgment-seat, they must forsooth sit down in it. Such people set themselves above me, and enjoy the same feelings as those in the one-shilling gallery who look down on Garrick. He is only on the stage, no higher than the footlights, and plays only for others; whereas they have placed themselves at the summit, and applaud and condemn to please their fancies. It is equitable that coarse impudence should be met with calm contempt, and that wisdom should sit down and lower her eyes when impudence trips over the way to discountenance her, or ignorance starts up to teach her.

Johnson. Coxcombs and blockheads always have been, and always will be, innovators; some in dress, some in polity, some in language.

Tooke. I wonder whether they invented the choice appellations you have just repeated.

Johnson. No, sir! Indignant wise men invented them.

Tooke. Long ago then. Indignant wise men lived in the time of the Centaurs: such combinations have never existed since. Your remark however on the introducers of new words into our language is, I apprehend, well-founded; but you spoke generally and absolutely, and in this (I think) incorrectly. Julius Cæsar, whom you ought to love and reverence for giving the last blow to a republic, was likewise an innovator in spelling; so was Virgil, and to such a degree that, Aulus Gellius tells us, he spelled the same word differently in different places, to gratify his ear. Milton has done the same.

Johnson. And sometimes injudiciously: for instance, in writing *Hee* emphatically; *He* less so. He also writes *subtile*, as a scholar should do; and *suttle*, as the word is pronounced by the most vulgar.

Tooke. Cicero, not contented with new spellings, created new words. Now the three Romans have immemorially been considered the most elegant and careful writers in their language; and we confer on our countryman but a small portion of the praises due to him, in asserting that both in poetry and prose his mastery is above them all. Milton is no factitious or accrete man; no pleader, no rhetorician. Truth in him is the parent of energy, and energy the supporter of truth. If we rise to the Greek language, the most eloquent man on record — Pericles — introduced the double T instead of the double S; and it was enamelled on that golden language to adorn the eloquence of Aspasia, and to shine among the graces of Alcibiades. Socrates bent his thoughtful head over it, and it was observed in the majestic march of Plato. At the same time, Thucydides and the tragedians, together with Aristophanes, contributed to form, or united to countenance, the *Middle Attic*. One would expect that elegance, and Atticism herself, might have rested and been contented. No: Xenophon, Plato, Æschines, Demosthenes, were promoters of the *New Attic*, altering and softening many words in the spelling. With such men before me, I think it to be deeply regretted that coxcombs and blockheads should be our only teachers, where we have much to learn, much to obliterate, and much to mend.

Johnson. Follow your betters, sir!

Tooke. Such is my intention: and it is also my intention that others shall follow theirs.

Johnson. Obey the majority, according to your own principles. You reformers will let nothing be great, nothing be stable. The orators you mention were deluders of the populace.

Tooke. And so were the poets, no doubt; but let us hope that the philosophers and moralists were not, nor indeed the writers of comedy. Menander was among the reformers; so was Plautus at Rome: the most highly estimated for his rich Latinity by Cicero and all the learned. Our own language had, under the translators of the Bible and of the Liturgy, reached the same pitch as the Latin had in the time of Plautus; and the sanctitude of Milton's genius gave it support, until the worst of French invasions overthrew it. Cowley, Sprat, Dryden, imported a trimmer and succincter dress, stripping the ampler of its pearls and bullion. Arbuthnot and Steele and Swift and Addison added no weight or precision to the language, nor were they choice in the application of words. None of them came up to their French contemporaries in purity and correctness; and their successors, who are more grammatical, are weak competitors with the rival nation for those compact and beautiful possessions. De Foe has a greater variety of powers than they, and he far outstrips in vigor and vivacity all the other pedestrians who started with him. He spells some words commendably, others not. Of the former are *onely*, *admitt*, *referr*, *supplie*, *relie*, *searcht*, *wisht;* of the latter, *perticulars*, *perusall*, *speciall*, *vallues*. Hurd, very minute and fastidious, in like manner writes often reprehensibly, though oftener well. Do you tolerate his "*catched*"?

Johnson. Sir, I was *teached* better.

Tooke. He also writes "under these circumstances."

Johnson. Circumstances are things *round about;* we are *in* them, not *under* them.

Tooke. We find "those who *had* rather *trust* to the equity" for "*would* rather." I believe he is the last writer who uses the word *wit* for *understanding*, although we continue to say, "he is out of his *wits*." He very properly says *encomiums*, to avoid a Grecism. We never say "rhododendr*a*," but rhododendro*ns*." In our honest old English, all 's well that ends well; and *encomiums*, *phenomenons*, *memorandums*, sound thoroughly and fully English. Hurd is less so in his use of the word *counterfeit*, which we are accustomed to take in an unfavorable sense. "Alexander suffered none but an Apelles and a Lysippus to *counterfeit* the form and features of his person." The sentence is moreover lax. I am glad, however, to find that he writes *subtile* instead of *subtle*. He has the merit, too, of using *hath* instead of *has* in many places, but is so negligent as to omit it sometimes before a word beginning with *s*, or *ce* and *ci*, and *ex*. This is less bad than before *th*. Like Middleton, he writes *chast*.

Johnson. Improperly. Nobody writes *wast* for *waste*. In all such words the vowel is pronounced long, which his spelling would contract. Dr. Hurd writes plainly, and yet not ignobly. His criticisms are always sensible, never acute; his language clear, but never harmonious.

Tooke. We cease to look for Eloquence; she vanished at the grave of Milton.

Johnson. Enough of Milton! Praise the French, sir! A republican is never so much at his ease as among slaves.

Tooke. We must lead happy lives then. But you were pleased to designate us as enemies to greatness and stability. What is it I admire in Milton but the greatness of his soul and the stability of his glory? Transitory is every thing else on earth. The minutest of worms corrodes the throne; a slimier consumes what sat upon it yesterday. I know not the intentions and designs of others: I know not whether I myself am so virtuous that I should be called a republican, or so intelligent that I should be called a reformer. In regard to stability, I do however think I could demonstrate to you that what has a broad basis is more stable than what has a narrow one, and that nothing is gained to solidity by top-heaviness. In regard to greatness, I doubt my ability to convince you. Much in this is comparative. Compared with the plain, the mountains are indeed high; compared with what is above them in the universe of space, they are atoms and invisibilities. Such too are mortals. I do not say the creatures of the cannon-foundry and the cutlery; I do not say those of the jeweller and toyman, from whom we exclude light as from infants in a fever, and to whom we speak as to drunken men to make them quiet, — but the most intellectual we ever have conversed with. What are they in comparison with a Shakspeare, or a Bacon, or a Newton? You, however, seemed to refer to power only. I have not meditated on this subject so much as you have, and my impression from it is weaker; nevertheless I do presume to be as hearty and as firm a supporter of it, removing (as I would do) the incumbrances from about it, and giving it ventilation.

Johnson. Ventilation! yes, forsooth, from the bellows of Brontes and Steropes and Pyracmon.

Tooke. Come, Doctor, let us throw a little more dust on our furnace, which blazes fiercelier than our work requires. The word *firy* comes appositely: why do we write it *fiery*, when *wire* gives *wiry?* The word rushes into my mind out of Shakspeare, —

> "And the *delighted* spirit
> To bathe in *fiery* floods."

Truly, this would be a very odd species of delight. But Shakspeare never wrote such nonsense; he wrote *belighted* (whence our *blighted*), struck by *lightning:* a fit preparation for such bathing. Why do we write *lieutenant*, when we write, "I would as *lief*"? Would there be any impropriety or inconvenience in writing end*e*vo*r* and *demeanor* as we write *tenor*, omitting the *u?*

Johnson. Then you would imitate cards of invitation, where we find *favor* and *honor*.

Tooke. We find *ancestor* and *author* and *editor* and *inventor* in the works of Doctor Jonson, who certainly bears no resemblance to a card of invitation. Why cannot we place all these words on the same bench? Most people will give us credit for knowing that they are derived from the Latin; but the wisest will think us fools for ending them like *hour*, *sour*, and *flour*, pronounced so differently. I look upon it as a piece of impudence to think we can correct the orthography of such writers as Selden and Milton. They wrote not only *honor*, *favor*, *labor*, but likewise *brest*, *lookt*, and *unlookt-for*, *kinde*, *minde*. To spell these differently is a gross absurdity.

Johnson. By removing a single letter from the holy word *Saviour*, you would shock the piety of millions.

Tooke. In that word there is an analogy with others, although the class is small: *paviour* and *behaviour*, for instance.

Johnson. It now occurs to me that *honor* was spelled without the *u* in the reign of Charles I., with it under his successor. Perhaps *armour* should be *armure*, from the low Latin *armatura*.

Tooke. If we must use such words as *reverie*, why not oblige them to conform with their predecessors, *travesty* and *gaiety*, which should have the *y* instead of the *i*. When we, following Cowley, write *pindarique*, we are laughed at; but nobody laughs at *picturesque* and *antique*, which are equally reducible to order.

Johnson. It is an awful thing to offend the Genius of our language. We cannot spell our words as the French spell theirs. No other people in the world could reduce to nothing so stiff and stubborn a letter as *x*, which they do in *eaux*.

Tooke. We never censure them for writing *carême*, which they formerly wrote *caresme*, more anciently *quaresme*, and other words similarly; yet they have one language for writing, another for speaking, and effect a semblance of grammatical construction by a heap of intractable letters. While three suffice with us (*a*, *m*, *a*), they use eight (*aimaient*), of which the greater part not only are unprofitable, but would, in any language on earth, express a sound, or sounds, totally different from what they stand for: r, s, t, end words whose final sound is our a. We never censure the Italians for writing *ricetto*, as they pronounce it, without a p, and *benedetto* without a c; we never shudder at the danger they incur of losing the traces of derivation. The most beautiful and easy of languages assumes no appearance of strength by the display of harshness, nor would owe its preservation to rust. Let us always be analogical when we can be so without offence to pronunciation. There are some few words in which we are retentive of the Norman laws. We write *island* with an s, as if we feared to be thought ignorant of its derivation. If we must be reverential to custom, let it rather be in the presence of the *puisne*, judge. There are only the words *puisne*, *isle*, *island*, *demesne*, *viscount*, and the family name *Grosvenor*, in which an *s* is unsounded. I would omit it in these. The French have set us an example here, rejecting the useless letter. They also write *dette*, which we write "debt." I know not why we should often use the letter b where we do. We have no need of it in *crumb* and *coomb;* the original words being without it.

Johnson. King Charles I. writes *dout.* In the same sentence he writes *wherefor*.* But to such authority such men as you refuse allegiance even in language. Your *coomb* is sterile, and your *crumb* is dry; as such minutenesses must always be.

Tooke. So are nuts; but we crack and eat them. They are good for the full, and for those only.

Johnson. The old writers had strange and arbitrary ways of spelling, which make them appear more barbarous than they really are. There are learned men who would be grieved to see removed from words the traces of their origin.

Tooke. There are learned men who are triflers and inconsiderate. Learning, by its own force alone, will never remove a prejudice or establish a truth. Of what importance is it to us that we have derived these words from the Latin through the French? We do not preserve the termination of either.

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* Letter to P. Rupert. See Forster's Life of Cromwell, in his *Statesmen of the Commonwealth.*

Formerly if many unnecessary letters were employed, some were omitted. *Ea* and *oa* were unusual. In various instances the spelling of Chaucer is more easy and graceful and elegant than the modern. He avoids the diphthong in *coat*, *green*, *keen*, *sheaf*, *goat;* writing *cote*, *grene*, *kene*, *shefe*, *gote.* Sackville, remarkable for diligence and daintiness of composition, spells "delights" *delites*, and "shriek" *shreek.* He also writes *bemone*, *brest*, *yeeld.* What we foolishly write *work* was formerly spelled *werke*, as we continue to pronounce it. Formerly there was such a word as *shew:* we still write it, but we pronounce it *show*, and we should never spell it otherwise. There is another of daily occurrence which we spell amiss, although we pronounce it rightly. *Coxcomb* in reality is *cockscomb*, and Ben Jonson writes it so, adding an *e.* He who first wrote it with an *x* certainly did not know how to spell his own name. In a somewhat like manner we have changed our *pennies* into *pence*, and our *acquaintants* into *acquaintance.* Now what have these gained by such exchange? Latterly we have run into more unaccountable follies; such as *compel* for *compell*, and I have seen *inter* for *interr.* Nobody ever pronounces the last syllables of these words short, as the spelling would indicate. You would be induced to believe such writers are ignorant that their *inter* and our *enter* are of a different stock. In the reign of Charles I. *parliament* was usually, though not universally, spelled *parlement:* how much more properly! What we write *door* and *floor*, the learned and judicious Jonson wrote *dore* and *flore.* I find in his writings *cotes*, *profest*, *partrich*, *grone*, *herth*, *theater*, *fórraine*, *diamant*, *phesants*, *mushromes*, *banisht*, *rapt*, *rackt*, *addrest*, *ake*, *spred*, *stomack*, *plee*, *strein* (song), *windore*, *fild* (filled), *moniment*, *beleeve*, *yeeld*, *scepter*, *sute* (from sue), *mist* (missed), *crackt*, *throte*, *yong*, *harbor*, *harth*, *oke*, *cruze*, *crost*, *markt*, *minde* (which it is just as absurd to write *mind* as it would be to write *time tim*), *taught*, *banisht*, *cherisht*, *heapt*, *thankt.* It is wonderful that so learned a man should be ignorant that *spitals* are hospitals. He writes: "Spittles, post-houses, hospitals." Had he spelled the first properly, as he has done all the other words, he could not have made this mistake. Fairfax writes *vew*, *bow* (bough), *milde*, *winde*, *oke*, *spred*, *talkt*, *embrast.* Fleming, in his translation of the Georgics, *ile*, *oke*, *anent* (which latter word, now a Scotticism, is used by Philemon

Holland), *gote, feeld, yeeld, spindel.* Drayton, and most of our earlier writers, instead of *thigh*, write *thie.* Milton in the Allegro, —

> "Where the bee with honied *thie.*"

I perceive that you yourself, in your letter to Lord Chesterfield, have several times written the word *til;* and I am astonished that the propriety of it is not generally acknowledged after so weighty an authority. *Sent*, for *scent*, is to be found in old writers, following the derivation. There are several words now obsolete which are more elegant and harmonious than those retained instead. *Gentleness* and *idleness* are hardly so beautiful as Chaucer's *Gentilesse* and *idlesse.* We retain the word *lessen*, but we have dropped *greaten.* Formerly good authors knew its value.

I wish I were as sure that

> Multa renascentur quæ jam cecidere,

as I am that

> cadentque
> Quæ nunc sunt in honore vocabula.

I am unacquainted with any language in which, during the prosperity of a people, the changes have run so seldom into improvement, so perpetually into impropriety. Within another generation, ours must have become so corrupt, that writers, if they hope for life, will find it necessary to mount up nearer to its sources.

Johnson. And what will they do when they get there? The leather from the stiff old jerkin will look queerly in its patches on the frayed satin.

Tooke. Good writers will suppress the violence of contrast. They will rather lay aside what by its impurity never had much weight, than what has lost it by the attrition of time; and they will be sparing of such expressions as are better for curiosities than for utensils. You and I would never say "by *that* means" instead of *these;* nor "*an* alms": yet Addison does. He also says a "*dish* of coffee;" yet coffee never was offered in a dish, unless it was done by the fox to the crane after the dinner he gave her. We hear of our *lyrical* poetry, of our *senate*, of our *manes*, of our *ashes*, of our *bards*, of our British *Muse.* Luckily the ancients could never run into these fooleries; but their judgment was rendered by discipline too exact for the admission of them. Only one valuable word has been received into our language since my birth, or perhaps since yours. I have lately heard *appreciate* for *estimate.*

Johnson. I am an anti-Gallican in speech as in sentiments. What we have fairly won from the French let us keep, and avoid their new words like their new fashions. Words taken from them should be amenable, in their spelling, to English laws and regulations. *Appreciate* is a good and useful one; it signifies more than *estimate* or *value:* it implies to "value *justly*." All words are good which come when they are wanted; all which come when they are not wanted should be dismissed.

Tooke. Let us return from new words to the old spellings of Benjamin Jonson, which other learned men followed: *deprest*, *speke*, *grete*, *fede*, *reson*, *reper*, *sheves*, *relefe*, *leve*, *grene*, *wether*, *erthe*, *breth*, *seke*, *seson*, *sege*, *meke*, *stepe*, *rome*, *appere*, *dere*, *throte*, *tothe*, *betwene*, *swete*, *deth*, *hele*, *chere*, *nere*, *frende*, *tretise*, *teche*, *conceve*, *tonge*, *bere*, *speche*, *stere.* Altogether there are about forty words, out of which the unnecessary diphthong is rejected. He always omits the s in *island* and *isle;* he writes *sovrane*, *subtil*, *childe*, and *werke.* He would no more have written *sceptre* than *quivre.*

Johnson. Milton, too, avoided the diphthong; he wrote *drede* and *redy.* Mandevile wrote *dede*, and *grane* of incense.

Tooke. You tell us that the letter *c* never ends a word according to English orthography; yet it did formerly both in words of Saxon origin and British, as *Eric*, *Rod-eric*, *Caradoc*, *Madoc.* *Wenlock*, the name of a town in Shropshire, formerly ended in *c*, and Hume always writes Warwic.

Johnson. Sir, do not quote infidels to me. Would you write *sic* and *quic?*

Tooke. I would, if we derived them from the Greek or Latin.

Johnson. Without the authority of Ben Jonson, on whom you so rely?

Tooke. There is in Jonson strong sense, and wit too strong; it wants airiness, ease, and volatility. I do not admire his cast-iron ornaments, retaining but little (and that rugged and coarse-grained) of the ancient models, and nothing of the workmanship. But I admire his judgment in the spelling of many words, and I wish we could return to it. In others, we are afraid of being as English as we might be and as we ought to be. Some appear to have been vulgarisms which are no longer such. By vulgarism I mean what is unfounded on ratiocination or necessity: for instance, *underneath*.

Johnson. Our best writers have used it.

Tooke. They have, and wisely; for it has risen up before them in sacred places, and it brings with it serious recollections. It was inscribed on the peasant's grave-stone, long before it shone amid heraldic emblems in the golden lines of Jonson, ushering in

"Pembroke's sister, Sydney's mother."

Beside, it is significant and euphonious. Either half conveys the full meaning of the whole. But it is silly to argue that we gain ground by shortening on all occasions the syllables of a sentence. Half a minute, if indeed so much is requisite, is well spent in clearness, in fulness, and pleasurableness of expression, and in engaging the ear to carry a message to the understanding. *Whilst* is another vulgarism which authors have adopted, the last letter being added improperly. *While* is "the *time* when;" *whiles* "the *times* when."

Johnson. I am inclined to pay little attention to such fastidiousness; nor does it matter a straw whether we use the double *e*, instead of *ete*, in *sweet*, and the other words you recited from good authors. But I now am reminded that *near* is *nigher*, by Sir Thomas More writing "*never* the *nere*." However, you are not to suppose that I undervalue the authority of Benjamin Jonson. I find sometimes his poetry unsatisfactory and troublesome; but his prose is much better, and now and then almost harmonious, which his verses never are for half-a-dozen lines together.

Tooke. I know little about poetry; but it appears to me that in his, where he has not the ague he has the cramp. Nearly all his thoughts are stolen. The prettiest of his poems,

"Drink to me only with thy eyes,"

is paraphrased from Scaliger's version of Aristænetus. He collected much spoil from his campaign in the Low Countries of Literature. However, his English for the most part is admirable; and was justly looked up to until Milton rose, overshadowing all England, all Italy, and all Greece. Since that great man's departure, we have had nothing (in style, I mean) at all remarkable. Locke and Defoe were the most purely English; and you yourself, who perhaps may not admire their simplicity, must absolve them from the charge of innovation. I perceive that you prefer the spelling of our gentlemen and ladies now flourishing to that not only of Middleton but of Milton.

Johnson. Before I say a word about either, I shall take the liberty, sir, to reprehend your unreasonable admiration of such writers as Defoe and Locke. What, pray, have they added to the dignity or the affluence of our language?

Tooke. I would gladly see our language enriched as far as it can be without depraving it. At present, we recur to the Latin and reject the Saxon. This is strengthening our language just as our empire is strengthened, — by severing from it the most flourishing of its provinces. In another age, we may cut down the branches of the Latin to admit the Saxon to shoot up again; for opposites come perpetually round. But it would be folly to throw away a current and commodious piece of money because of the stamp upon it, or to refuse an accession to an estate because our grandfather could do without it. A book composed of merely Saxon words (if indeed such a thing could be) would only prove the perverseness of the author. It would be inelegant, inharmonious, and deficient in the power of conveying thoughts and images, of which indeed such a writer could have but extremely few at starting. Let the Saxon, however, be always the groundwork.

Johnson. Is Goldsmith plain and simple enough for you?

Tooke. I prefer him to all our writers now living; but he has faults such as we do not find in less men, — Louth, for instance, and Hurd. In his *Essay on the Present State of Polite Literature*, he thus terminates a sentence: "Without a friend to drop a tear on their *unattended obsequies*." Now what are *obsequies* but funeral attendance? And surely he is a bad philosopher and a worse historian who says, —

> "A time there was, ere England's griefs began,
> When every rood of ground maintained its man."

There never was any such time ; and, if ever there should be, we who believe that " England's griefs " have more than begun already, are fortunate in being born at the present day.

Johnson. He writes more correctly than Middleton ; so let him alone. Middleton is not so correct a writer as you fancy. He was an infidel, sir, and, what is worse, a scoffer. He wants the sweetness of Pope and Addison, the raciness of Dryden and Cowley, the compression of Swift and Hobbes, the propriety and justness and elevation of Barrow, the winning warmth and affectionate soul of Jeremy Taylor, the terseness of Junius, the vivacity of Burke, clinging to a new idea like a woodbine to a young tree, till he embraces every part of it and overtops it.

Tooke. I was apprehensive of your insisting that we have nothing so classical in our language as the *Life of Cicero ;* for such, I understand, is the opinion of our scholars at the Universities. I have detected many inaccuracies in Middleton ; not in his reasonings and conclusions, for in these he is clear and strong, but in expression. He says, in his *Letter from Rome*, "The temple of some heathen deity, *or* that of the Paphian Venus," as if the Paphian Venus was not a heathen deity. " Popery, *which* abounds with instances of the grossest forgeries both of saints and reliques, *which* have been *imposed for genuine*," &c. To have been *forgeries*, they must have been *imposed for genuine:* here is also a confusion in the repetition of *which*, relating to two subjects ; as again, " The prejudices *which* the authority of so celebrated a writer may probably *inject* to the disadvantage of my argument, *which*," &c.

Johnson. If Warburton had been as discerning in language as he was acute in argument, he would have exposed to ridicule the expression, " *inject a prejudice*."

Tooke. His acuteness seems usually to have forsaken him the moment he lost his malignity. As some beasts muddy the water by tramping it before they drink, so nothing is palatable to Warburton but what he has made turbid. Nothing is weaker than his argument on this question, nothing more inelegant than his phraseology. In another place, he writes " *de*nounced " for " *an*nounced." Our pugnacious bishop, although he defended the divine legation of Moses, would have driven the chariot of Pharaoh against him into the Red Sea. He says, in reference to Middleton, "How many able writers have employed *their* time and learning to prove Christian Rome to have borrowed *their* superstitions from the pagan city!" He means *her* superstitions, and not the superstitions of the *able writers*, which the words, as they stand, designate. He surely could not dissent from Middleton, with whom nearly all the papists agree; drawing, however, far different inferences.

Johnson. On this ground I go with Middleton; he states a historical fact; he states a thing visible: but while he pretends to approach Religion for the sake of looking at her dress, he stabs her. Come, sir! come sir! philology rather than this!

Tooke. A little more, then, of philology; but first, let me suggest to you that no stab, my good Doctor, can inflict a dangerous wound on Truth. Homer had probably the design of impressing some such sentiment, when he said that gashes in celestial bodies soon unite again. If you have ever had the curiosity to attend a course of lectures on chemistry, or have resided in the house of any friend who cultivates it, you may perhaps have observed how a single drop of colorless liquid, poured on another equally colorless, raises a sudden cloud and precipitates it to the bottom: so, unsuspected falsehood, taken up as pure and limpid, is thrown into a turbid state by a drop; and it does not follow that the drop must be of poison.

I wish it were possible on all occasions to render the services we owe to criticism, without the appearance of detracting from established or from rising reputations. Since, however, the judicious critic will animadvert on none whose glory can be materially injured by his strictures, — on none whose excellence is not so great and so well founded that his faults in the comparison are light and few, — the labor is to be endured with patience. For it is only by this process that we can go on from what is good to what is perfect. I am in the habit of noting down the peculiarities of every book I read; and, knowing that I was to meet you here, I have placed in the fold of my sleeve such as I once collected out of Middleton.

Johnson. I shall be gratified, sir, by hearing them; and much more than by dissertations, however rich and luminous, on his character and genius, which prove nothing else to me than the abilities of the dissertator.

Tooke. I will begin them with his orthography. He writes constantly *intire*, *onely*, *florish*, *embassador*, *inquire*, *genuin*, *tribun*, *troublesom*, *chast*, *hast* for *haste*, *wast* for *waste.*

Johnson. Pronouncing the three last as the common people do universally, and as others beside common people do in his native county, Yorkshire. I approve of the five first; I disapprove of the rest.

Tooke. We who condemn the elision of the final *e* in these words, in which the pronunciation requires it, elide it where it must likewise be pronounced. Our better authors in a wiser age never wrote *find*, *mind*, *kind*, *blind*, without the final vowel.

Johnson. It is wonderful we ever should have consented to part with it, having once had it, and knowing its use.

Tooke. To return to Middleton. He writes *battel*, *sepulcher*, *luster*, *theater*.

Johnson. I do not blame him. Milton, and most of our best scholars, have done the same. Addison saw at Verona the famous *theater*.

Tooke. He writes the verb *rebell* with a single *l*.

Johnson. The fault must surely be the printer's; and yet several final consonants have lately been omitted in our verbs, either by the ignorance and indifference of the writer, or by the unrebuked self-sufficiency of the compositor. I was unaware that the corruption began so early, and with a scholar.

Tooke. He writes *grandor* in preference to *grandeur;* the only word of the kind which we persist in writing as the French do. Their *honneur* and *faveur* are domesticated with us and invested with our livery, while the starveling *grandeur* is left alone like a swallow on the house-top, when all the others have flown away. *Grandor* sounds more largely and fully than that puny offspring of the projected jaw. The authority of Milton, were there no other and better, ought to eliminate so ungainly an anomaly; for *liqueur* is not yet Englished.

Johnson. No, sir! we have *dram*. But whatever we would be ashamed of expressing in English, we call in French.

Tooke. Of the three words *soup*, *group*, *troop*, borrowed from the French, there is only one which we have fairly naturalized. If *troop* is written with a double *o*, instead of *ou*, why should not the others?

Johnson. Why, indeed?

Tooke. *Creature* has only two syllables, *creator* three. Why not write *creture*, as we pronounce it? correcting an anomaly so easily.

Now, to go on again with Middleton. He confuses *born* and *borne;* which indeed are of the same origin, but differently spelled in their different significations. As these two participles are the same, so are the two substantives *flower* and *flour;* which we may see the more plainly by removing them a little out of our own language, and placing them at the side of a cognate word in another. An academy of Tuscany, still in existence I think, entitled *Della Crusca*, chose for its emblem a sieve, and for its motto, *Il più bel fior ne coglie.*

Johnson. True enough; and now indeed I perceive the reason, indifferently versed as I am in the Italian language, why the members of that academy have been universally called, of late years, *coglioni.*

Tooke. Whenever I hear a gentleman addressed by that title, I shall bow to him as to a personage of high distinction, if I should travel at any time so far as Florence.

Johnson. Rightly judged, sir! A *coglione* in all countries is treated (I doubt not) with deference and respect.

Tooke. Middleton writes *clame*, *proclame*, *exclame* (I think, properly); as *pretense* and *defense.* He never uses the word *boast*, but *brag* instead of it; and the word *ugly*, in itself not elegant, most inelegantly. "There are many *ugly* reports about him," "which Cicero calls an *ugly* blow," "an *ugly* precedent," "an *ugly* disturbance broke out." He uses *proper*, too, as only the vulgar do. "Cicero never speaks of him with respect, nor of his government but as of a *proper* tyranny." "*A proper apotheosis.*"

Johnson. I did not imagine him to be so little choice in his expressions; you have collected a number that quite astonishes me.

Tooke. May I read on?

Johnson. Are there more still upon that small piece of paper? Pray satisfy my curiosity.

Tooke. Will you admit a *southsayer?*

Johnson. No, truly; although in the days of Elizabeth many wrote it so.

Tooke. And many wrote then more idiomatically and more analogically than at present. What we write *monarch* and *tetrarch*, they wrote *monark* and *tetrark*, as we find in Aylmer and all the learned. Why should they be spelled like *arch* and *march* and *starch?*

Johnson. I agree with you: we did spell several words better in the reigns of Elizabeth and James than we do now. The learned were recognized then, and inferiors submitted to legitimate authority.

Tooke. Yet, Doctor, you inform us in your preface that if the authors who write *honor*, *labor*, *explane*, *declame*, &c., have done no good, they have done little harm, because few have followed them, and because they innovated little. In fact, the writers to whom you refer have not innovated at all, but have followed the best authorities, and attempted to do good by substituting the better for the worse. A man or a writer is not the less good because he is not followed. There was a time, we read, when all went wrong, excepting one family. Every one of the words you have cited was written by learned, harmonious, and (I will add) considerate and elegant writers, excepting *red*, to which two unnecessary letters were added; of these, the last has been rejected by universal consent. The double *d* was retained to distinguish the preterite of the verb from the adjective *red;* but the sense alone would always do that. Some other words are without the same advantage. We frequently find the adverb *still*, where it is doubtful whether it is an adverb or an adjective; for which reason, as well as for analogy, I would write *stil.* We write *until*, and should, as you have done, write *til.* In the same preface, you inform us that "Our language has been exposed to the corruptions of ignorance and the caprices of innovation." This is true, and to an extent which few men have the organs to see clearly. You commend the spelling of *highth* by Milton; and at the same time you are reluctant to correct our worst anomalies, declaring your unwillingness to "disturb upon narrow views, or for minute propriety, the orthography of our fathers." But if our fathers were licentious, and encroached on the patrimony of our grandfathers, what is to be done? Would it not be well to recover, by any obvious and honest means, as much as may be? If my father was a hair-dresser, and chatted agreeably but wrote vilely, would it not be better to imitate my grandfather, who was a curate, and who spoke with seriousness and wrote with precision?

Johnson. Perhaps you are right. I have had my fling at Middleton; now take yours again.

Tooke. Do you prefer a Gallicism or a Latinism? However, you shall have both. "Not *obnoxious* to Clodius's law," for not *amenable*, *liable*, or *subject.* Then, "He dresses up in a clear and agreeable style;" then he goes on to "depreciate a *name*, so highly revered for its patriotism, and *whose* writings," &c. Now in what school-room was *name* ever taught to *write.* "The senate had no stomach to meddle with an affair so delicate."

Johnson. The delicacy of a thing, in general, is no reason why the stomach is disinclined to meddle with it.

Tooke. "An oath which Cato himself, though he had publicly declared that he would never do it, was forced at last to swallow. He had digested many things against his will."

Johnson. He might have swallowed them against his will; but surely he must have been the more glad at having digested them, in proportion to their hardness. If he digested them against his will, the digestion could not have been forced nor difficult. The evil is, when we have the will and cannot do it! But I hope we may now leave the dining-room.

Tooke. In Middleton's time, it was usual to call Cicero by the familiar name of *Tully*, and we continue to say *Tully's Offices.* A mere Englishman, and only to such should we think we are speaking when we speak in English, would never comprehend the meaning of the title.

Johnson. Why not call the book *Cicero on Moral Obligations*, or in one word, on *Duties?*

Tooke. It might deceive some purchasers, on seeing only the title-page. *Duties*, in our days, signify *taxes.* Whenever we talk of the duties simply and solely, the taxes are understood: these being the only duties which statesmen inculcate on the people. The Roman names have fared among us worse than the Greek. Several retain their full proportions. Mark Antony has no Roman feature: such a name is more applicable to an English coal-heaver or mackerel-crier, than to the great orator or the celebrated triumvir.

Johnson. In a translation from the Latin, wherever the Romans are introduced as speakers, I should think it more dignified to pronounce the names at full. I would not offer my money in a clipped and sweated state.

Tooke. We retain the folly of turning the Greeks into Romans, and ending in *us* what ought to end in *os;* as Anyt*us* and Melit*us*. This is absurder than naturalizing them at once. Are you inclined to look again at the coarseness and clumsiness of Middleton?

Johnson. Drag him out, by all means.

Tooke. "I did not take him to be a rascal." "Such clauses were only bugbears." "The occasion was so pat." "Shall I do it, *says I*, in my own way?" and, two lines lower, "I will move the senate then, *says I;*" and, three after, "So I thought, *says I*." Cicero is the speaker! "*Cross* the Tyber," for *across*. "I *had* rather *have* him the comrade of Romulus than of the goddess Safety." "To try what fortunes he could *carve* for himself." "He seems to be hard *put to it* for a pretext." "Part *with without* regret." "*Dressing up* an impeachment." "If any other fate *expect me*." "They would submit their conduct to the judgment of Cato, and deposit four thousand pounds *apiece* in his hands."

Johnson. *Apiece*, although Hooker has once applied the expression to men, ought never in such cases to be used instead of *each*. Its proper sense is of things salable, inert or alive; but rather of the inert.

Tooke. In that case, it might do very well for his senate or ours. I find in most writers the word *each* used indiscriminately for *every*. This is wrong in prose: *each* ought never to be employed but in reference to persons or things mentioned before.

Johnson. I never heard that.

Tooke. It may be wrong; consider it. Middleton translates the word *innocens*, which, when spoken of military men, signifies their forbearance and moderation, into *innocent*,— a term quite ridiculous when thus applied in English. In Cato's letter to Cicero, about his intended triumph, we find it thrice. "Young *Cæsar flowed* from the source of my counsels." "What *flows* from the result."

Johnson. False metaphor!

Tooke. If ever they *got the better.*" "To *give* the *exclusion.*" "Coming *forward towards.*"

Johnson. Redundant and very inelegant!

Tooke. He always writes *oft* instead of *often.*

Johnson. Poetry alone has this privilege.

Tooke. "The high office *which* you fill, and the eminent distinction *that* you bear."

Johnson. Much better without both *which* and *that.*

Tooke. He uses the superlative *freest.*

Johnson. Properly the word *free* has no comparative nor superlative: for all monosyllables are made dissyllables by them, which could not be in *freer* and *freest.* I do not willingly write *re-establish* or *re-edify.* The better word for the one would be *restablish*, if *restore* and *refix* are inadequate; and for the other, *reconstruct.* It is bad enough to be affected; but it is intolerable to be at once affected and uncouth. Justly may he be laughed at who falls into that slough which with a troublesome mincing gait he would avoid. They who might be shocked at *reappear* as a dissyllable, tolerate *ideal* as one, and *real* as a monosyllable.* Yet they would pronounce *reality* and *ideality* rightly. Many of Middleton's political and religious, and some of his moral and historical, reflections do not please me.

Tooke. A scholar, as he was, should never have countenanced the sentence of Valerius Maximus on Marius. "Arpinum," he says, "had the singular felicity to produce the most *glorious contemner*, as well as the most illustrious improver, of the arts and eloquence." A singular kind of felicity indeed! If this glory had had its followers, the greater part of the world would at this time have been a forest. He places strange and discordant ideas in close apposition. Speaking of Sylla, he says, "He employed himself particularly in *reforming the disorders* of the State, by putting his new *laws* in execution, and in *distributing the*

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* We find in Byron "*real*" a monosyllable. Neither he nor any one else ever made "*reality*" a trisyllable. He caught it from a Scotch mother, quite uneducated. His grammar is very incorrect: for instance:

> "Let *he* who made thee answer that." — *Cain.*

confiscated lands of the adverse party among his legions: so that the republic seemed to be once more seated on a *legal basis*, and the laws and judicial proceedings began to flourish in the forum." Confiscation is a pretty legal basis, no doubt. Here he brings me to the Rostra. *Rostra* must be plural: I wonder he wrote "*that* rostra." There is an idle and silly thought in the preface. Romulus, he tells you, seems to have *borrowed* the plan of his new State from the old government of Athens, as it was instituted by Theseus. What could Romulus know of Theseus or of Athens? The people were in the same state of civilization, had the same wants, and satisfied them alike. Romulus borrowed the houses, harvests, and wives of those near him: he borrowed no more from Athens than from 'Change-Alley. The laws of Solon were known to Numa first among the Romans, — if indeed Numa was a Roman, and not rather a Corinthian. The name seems fictitious.

Johnson. Leave politics alone; let history lie quiet. What I remarked, some time since, on comparatives and superlatives makes me desirous that we had a collection of Latin and English comparatives, the former terminating in the masculine and feminine by *ior*, the latter in *er*. It would show us at a glance to what words the Roman writers, and our own, thought it better to prefix *magis* and *more*, instead of the comparative by the termination; and we should see, what never occurred to me until now, that the ancient and elegant chose the simpler mode preferably. Middleton, whom you have been quoting and examining so attentively, writes *honester*, *modester:* Milton, *virtuousest.*

Tooke. With all my veneration for this extraordinary and exemplary man, I would never use the word; and with all the preference I give, whenever it can be given, to the comparative formed by the final syllable, I never would admit it, nor the superlative, in words ending with *ous:* such as *virtuous*, *pious*, *religious.*

Johnson. Nor I, truly; but perhaps our contemporaries are somewhat too abstemious in words to which it might be more gracefully adapted.

Tooke. Middleton writes "for good and all." This is somewhat in the manner of your friend Edmund Burke, who uses the word *anotherguess;* in which expression are both vulgarity and ignorance: the real term is *another-guise;* there is nothing of *guessing.* Beside *another-guise* we have *another-gates:*

> "When Hudibras about to enter
> Upon *anothergates* adventure," &c.

Johnson. Edmund Burke, sir, is so violent a reformer that I am confident he will die a Tory. I am surprised that any thing he does or says should encounter your disapprobation. He, sir, and Junius should have been your favorites, if indeed they are not one and the same; for Edmund writes better when he writes for another, and any character suits him rather than his own. Shenstone, when he forgot his Strephons and Corydons and followed Spenser, became a poet. Your old antagonist, Junius, wears an elegant sword-knot, and swaggers bravely. What think you?

Tooke. His words are always elegant, his sentences always sonorous, his attacks always vigorous, and rarely (although I may be a sufferer by admitting it) misplaced. However, those only can be called great writers, who bring to bear on their subject more than a few high faculties of the mind. I require in him, whom I am to acknowledge for such accuracy of perception, variety of mood, of manner, and of cadence; imagination, reflection, force, sweetness, copiousness, depth, perspicuity. I require in him a princely negligence of little things, and a proof that, although he seizes much, he leaves much (alike within his reach) unappropriated and untouched. Let me see nothing too trim, nothing quite incondite. Equal solicitude is not to be exerted upon all ideas; some are brought into the fulness of light, some are adumbrated: so, on the beautiful plant of our conservatories, a part is in fruit, a part in blossom; not a branch is leafless, not a spray is naked. Then come those graces and allurements, for which we have few and homely names, but which among the ancients had many, and expressive of delight and of divinity, — *lepores*, *illecebræ*, *veneres*, &c. These, like the figures that hold the lamps on staircases, both invite us and show us the way up; for, write as wisely as we may, we cannot fix the minds of men upon our writings, unless we take them gently by the ear.

Johnson. On this we meet and agree; but you exact too much. You include too many great properties within your stipulations.

Tooke. Several of these in Junius were uncalled for; some that would have been welcome were away; and he is hardly a great writer in whom any thing that is great is wanting.

Johnson. Sometimes even Cicero himself is defective both in ratiocination and in euphony.

Tooke. It cannot be controverted that, even in this most eloquent author, there are sentences which might be better.

Johnson. For instance, in the monkish canticle, —

Bellum autem ita *suscipiatur*
Ut nihil aliud nisi pax quæsita *videatur*.

Tooke. By writing *susceptum sit*, he would have avoided the censure he has here incurred too justly. Toward the end of his dialogue, *De Claris Oratoribus*, he runs into the tautology, "*Hic me dolor tangit; hæc me cura solicitat.*" Can any thing be more self-evident, and therefore more unnecessary to state and insist on, than *that those are worthy of friendship in whom there is a reason why they should be our friends?* —

Digni autem sunt amicitiâ, quibus in ipsis inest causa cur diligantur:

or indeed much more so, than *that old age comes on by degrees;* which he expresses in words redundant with the letter *s:* —

Sensim sine sensu ætas senescit.

And I wish I could think it were free from the ambition of an antithesis, in the *sensim sine sensu*.

Johnson. He is the only Latin prose writer in whom you will find a pentameter: —

Quid dominus navîs? eripietne suum?

And I doubt whether in any other the tenses of *possum* are repeated seven times in about fourteen lines,* as they are here, with several of the same both before and after.

Tooke. This pentameter is not his only one.

Johnson. Stop there. We write pentameter with the *e* before the *r*, and *metre* inversely. I throw out this fresh bone to you in my largess.

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* *De Officiis*, l. ii., beginning at the close of the paragraph, "Adde ductus aquarum," &c.

Tooke. In the third book, *De Oratore*, where he reproves the fault, he commits it. If you never have remarked the passage, you will wonder at finding both a hexameter and pentameter and in sequence: —

> Complexi plus multo etiam vidisse videntur
> Quam quantum nostrorum ingeniorum acies, &c.

Milton puts several verses together in his prose. At the conclusion of the second book of his *Treatise against Prelaty*, are nearly four of the most powerful and harmonious he ever wrote: —

> "When God commands to take the trumpet," &c.

In another place he likewise writes as prose, —

> "The blessed meekness of his lowly roof,
> Those ever open and inviting doors," &c.

But these last, although good, fair verses, are only to the pitch of *Paradise Regained.*

Johnson. The dog barked at bishops; and Cicero praised those who slew his benefactor.

Tooke. We have nothing to do at present with the politics of either, although we have raised into a blaze the tenets of the one, and have slain more friends than the other ever conciliated or deserved. Let us try to express our thoughts as clearly; we may then as easily pardon those who discover a few slight faults in our writings, as he would pardon us, were he living, for pointing them out in his. The two most perfect writers (I speak of style) are Demosthenes and Pascal; but all their writings put together are not worth a third of what remains to us of Cicero; nor can it be expected that the world will produce another (for the causes of true eloquence are extinct) who shall write at the same time so correctly, so delightfully, and so wisely.

Johnson. Let him give way, sir, let him give way, for your rump-parliament and regicide. The causes of true eloquence are extinct! I understand you, sir: rump and regicide for ever!

Tooke. Doctor, I am not one of those who would agitate so idle a question as, whether it is the part of a contemptible man, much less whether it is that of a criminal one, to scoff at superstitions forbidden by the religion of our country, or to punish with death and ignominy a torturer, a murderer, a tyrant, a violater of all his oaths and a subverter of all his laws!

Johnson. That sentence, sir, is too graceful for mouths like yours. *Burn, sink, and destroy*, are words of better report from the hustings.

Tooke. I presume you mean, Doctor, when they are directed by pious men against men of the same language and lineage: for words, like ciphers and persons, have their value from their place. I am sorry you seem offended.

Johnson. It is the nature of the impudent never to be angry.

Tooke. Impudence, I find, is now for the first time installed among the Christian virtues.

Johnson. No, sir: impudence is to virtue what cynicism is to stoicism. Nothing is harder or crueler; nothing seems less so.

Tooke. Doctor, let me present to you this cup of tea.

Johnson. Why! the man wears upon his mind an odd party-colored jacket, — half courtier, half rebel. I do not think I have flattered him very much; yet he bowed as if he was suing me to dance with him.

I can listen, sir, while you talk rationally: but I am angry that a gentleman of your abilities should be so inordinately fond of change. Do you think any thing correct in any author whatsoever?

Tooke. Once I was of opinion that nothing in Pascal could be corrected or improved: this opinion I have seen reason to change, still considering him more exact and elaborate than the best English writers. In the second sentence of his *Provincial Letters*, he says, "Tant d'assemblées d'une compagnie aussi célèbre qu'est la Faculté de Théologie à Paris, et où il s'est passé tant de choses *si extraordinaires* et *si* hors d'exemple, en font concevoir une *si* haute idée qu'on ne peut croire qu'il n'y en ait un sujet bien *extraordinaire.* Cependant vous serez bien surpris, quand vous apprendrez par ce récit à quoi se termine un *si* grand éclat."

Johnson. These repetitions indeed appear inelegant.

Tooke. In the first sentence, a few lines above, he used *bien abusé*, and afterward *bien important*. I shall make no observation on the disagreeable recurrence of sound in *surpris* and *récit*. Similar sounds have sometimes a good effect; but it must be an exquisite ear that distinguishes the proper time. Permit me to continue the period. "Et c'est ce que je vous dirai en peu de mots, après m'en être parfaitement instruit."

Johnson. Here I can detect no fault.

Tooke. It lies in the reasoning: Pascal says plainly, "You will be much surprised, when you learn by my recital how such a bustle terminates; and I will tell you it in few words, when I am perfectly informed of it."

Johnson. I have not seen the error.

Tooke. How can Pascal say positively that his correspondent will be *much surprised* at the result of a thing which he is about to relate, when he himself does not well know what that result will be? That he does not, is evident; because he says he will tell him *after* he has discovered the matter of fact. He makes another promise too, rather hazardous: he promises that he will tell it in few words. Now, not seeing the extent of the information he may receive on it, few words perhaps might not suffice.

Johnson. I doubt whether the last objection be not hypercriticism.

Tooke. Better that than *hypocriticism*, — the vague and undisciplined progeny of our Mercuries, which run furiously from the porter-pot to the tea-pot, and then breathe their last. There can be no hypercriticism upon such excellent writers as Pascal. Few suspect any fault in him; hardly one critic in a century can find any. Impudence may perch and crow upon high places, and may scratch up and scatter its loose and vague opinions: this suits idlers; but *we* neither talk to the populace, nor stand in the sun pointing out what they heed not, and what they could never perceive.

Another fault of his comes into my recollection, and could never come more opportunely than after my expression of esteem for him. "C'est le motif de tous les hommes, jusqu' à ceux qui se tuent *et qui se pendent*." As if he who hangs himself is different from him who kills himself, and has another motive. Were the volumes of Pascal before me, I might lay my finger on other small defects, some in expression, some in reasoning: and I should do it; for you would not suffer him to fall thereby in your esteem, nor even to mingle in the crowd of high literary names. He stands with few; and few will ever join him.

Johnson. Good scholars and elegant writers may sometimes lapse. Gray is both; yet he says, —

> "Their name, their years, spelt by the unlettered Muse," &c.

There were nine, mythologists tell us; but they have forgotten to inform us which was the unlettered one. We might as well talk of the powerless Jupiter, the lame Mercury, and the squinting Venus. In another poem, *the court was sat* is not English; nor is the note, in the *Ode to Music*, on Mary de Valence, "of whom tradition says that her husband:" tradition does not speak here of *her*, but of *the* husband. I have attempted to demonstrate some improprieties of expression in other places.

Tooke. You are supposed by many inconsiderate readers to have been too severe on him.

Johnson. A critic is never too severe when he only detects the faults of an author. But he is worse than too severe when, in consequence of this detection, he presumes to place himself on a level with genius. A rat or a serpent can find a hole in the strongest castle; but they could about as much construct it as he could construct the harmonious period or "the lofty rhyme." Severity lies in rash exaggeration and impudent exposure. Such as fall into it cut their own fingers, and tie them up so clumsily as to make them useless. He who exults over light faults betrays a more notable want of judgment than he censures. Sir, have I been too minute in my examination of Gray?

Tooke. I think you have not; but I doubt whether you have assigned to him that place among the poets (I dare hardly say the men of genius) to which he is entitled. Expunge from his *Elegy* the second and third stanzas, together with all those which follow the words, —

> "Even in our ashes live their wonted fires,"

and you will leave a poem with scarcely a blemish: a poem which will always have more readers than any other in any language. Every church-yard contains a monument of Gray inscribed with everlasting characters.

Johnson. You are enthusiastic for once.

Tooke. No poetry can make me that; and I am quite as sensible of Gray's imperfections as you are. He is often very harsh, and, what is wonderful in so laborious a composer, incorrect.

Johnson. Come hither, young lady! Have you Gray's poems? Go fetch them. Now give them this gentleman. Sir! you need not kiss her hand: she is not the queen.

Tooke. That graceful courtesy might have well deceived me.

Johnson. Sir! you make the girl blush.

Tooke. If so, I implore you not to look so steadfastly at her, pointing me out for so great a criminal.

Johnson. Whisper less loudly. She caught every syllable, and walked away smiling. And now she is standing before the fire, to lay all her blushes upon that.

Tooke. Doctor, you are surely the nicest of observers. Turn, if you please: here are the words we want: —

"Fair Venus' train."

Johnson. Ay, indeed, that is harsh enough.

Tooke.

"Yet hark how through the peopled air
The busy murmur glows."

Johnson. He might as well have said, *Hark!* what fantastic green palings and dingy window-shutters!

Tooke. "The azure flowers that blow," are precisely the azure flowers that never did blow.

"Hard unkindness' altered eye"

is harsh, ungrammatical, unpoetical, and worse than nonsense. If her eye were altered, it must be altered for the better.

"Gay Hope is theirs, by Fancy fed,
Less pleasing when possest."

Unless they possessed it, how is it theirs? He means the *object* of Hope, not Hope.

"Nor second he that *rode sublime*
Upon the seraph wings of ecstasy
The secrets of the abyss to spy."

This is just as if I should ride to Highgate or Harrow for the purpose of looking into the hold of a lighter on the Thames. Who would ride *sublime* to spy what lies low, even in an abyss, — particularly to spy its secrets? Speaking of Dryden he mentions his "*bright-eyed fancy.*" Vigorous sense and happy expression are the characteristics of Dryden, certainly not fancy.

"Thoughts that *breathe.*"

It is no great matter to say that of them.

"Loose his beard."

Beards were never tied up like the tails of coach-horses.

"Hark! how each giant oak and desert cave
Sighs to the torrent's awful voice beneath;
O'er thee, O king, their hundred arms they wave."

Who wave their hundred arms? Why, the giant oaks, to be sure. True enough; but not the desert caves, nor the torrent's awful voice; and never was sighing more in vain than theirs.

"The thread is *spun.*"

The thread must have been spun before they began *weaving.*

"And gorgeous dames and statesmen old
In bearded majesty appear."

What! the gorgeous dames too? Where were their scissors?

"Nor envy base, nor creeping gain,
Dare the Muse's walk to *stain.*"

One would think he had before his eyes the geese on Wimbledon common. And I wish he had not written

"Ah happy hills! ah pleasing shades!
Ah fields beloved in vain!"

Johnson. Why so? the verses are tender.

Tooke. In the next breath he tells us plainly that they were *not* beloved in vain; quite the contrary, — that they soothed his weary soul and breathed a second spring. What could he have more from them?

Johnson. Rent, sir, rent. I have graver things to adduce against him. He has dared to talk about the *star of Brunswick.*

Tooke. Doctor, I entreat you, as a lover of loyalty, to let every man be loyal in his own way. Obedience to the existing laws is a virtue; respect and reverence of misfortune is another. Only cast out from the pale of loyalty those who espouse the interests of a part rather than of the whole. Whenever I see a person, whose connections are plebeian, strive and strain for aristocracy, I know what the fellow would have: he would sacrifice the interests of his friends and class for his own profit. Generosity may induce the high-born man to drop behind his family, and to concern himself in bettering the condition of those below him. Officiousness and baseness are the grounds on which the plebeian moves, who wrangles and fights for certain men more powerful than enough without him. This is the counterfeit loyalty on which I would gladly see descend your reprobating stamp and hammer. The star of Brunswick is no more censurable than the star of Brentford, and very like it both in brilliancy and magnitude.

Johnson. Return to philology: even Cicero himself, as we have seen, speaks incorrectly.

Tooke. Sometimes. Yet my estimation of his good sense and eloquence is undiminished by his inattention and negligence, which rarely occur, and on unimportant matters. The English use *infinity* for *innumerability*, which word he uses: and it is curious, as being the only word in the whole compass of Latinity which (with its enclitic) contains nine syllables. "Infinitatem locorum *innumerabilitatemque* mundorum." I never can think that the word *infinitior* is founded on reason. What is infinite cannot be *more* infinite. I do not object so strongly to *perfectissimus*: this is only a mode of *praising* what is perfect, which, like infinity, cannot be extended or increased. There are words, however, which neither in their sense nor their formation seem capable of a comparative or superlative. There are properly no such words as *resistless*, *relentless*, *exhaustless*, which we often find not only in poetry but in prose; for all adjectives ending in *less*, of which the first to strike us authors is *moneyless*, are formed from substantives. Yet we cannot say *more* or *most* peer*less; more* or *most* penni*less*. We often find indeed a *most* care*less* servant, a *most* thought*less* boy; but the expression is at least inelegant and unhappy: I should even say vicious, if celebrated writers did not check and control me by their authority.

Johnson. Sir, this is quibbling.

Tooke. If correctness be the best part of eloquence, and as ninety-nine to a hundred in it, which I think it is, then this is no quibble. When our servants or tradesmen speak to us, it is quite enough that we understand them; but in a great writer we require exactness and propriety. Unless we have them from him we are dissatisfied, in the same manner as if the man who refuses to pay us a debt should offer us a present. I am ready for eloquence when I find correctness. You complain, and justly, of that affected and pedantic expression of Milton, where he says that Adam was the most comely of men ever born since, and Eve the fairest of her daughters.

Johnson. Ay, certainly.

Tooke. Yet you understand what he means. We employ in our daily speech an expression equally faulty. We say, "You of all *others* ought not," &c. Now surely *you* are not one of *others*. Correctly spoken, the phrase would be, "You of all men." On reading Milton's verses the other day, I recollected a parallel passage in *Tacitus* on *Vespasian:* "Solus omnium *ante se* principum in melius mutatus:" and fancying that I had seen it quoted by La Rochefoucauld, I had the curiosity to inquire in what manner he translated it: for he leaves none without a French version. His words are, "Il fut le seul des empereurs, *ses prédécesseurs*, qui changea en mieux." Here we see how two acute men pass over, without observing it, a preposterous perversion of language and plain sense.

Johnson. There are faults committed by pedants for the mere purpose of defending them.

Tooke. Writers far removed from pedantry use expressions which, if we reflect on them, excite our wonder.

Johnson. Better those than vulgarisms.

Tooke. There we disagree. No expression can become a vulgarism which has not a broad foundation. The language of the vulgar hath its source in physics, — in known, comprehended, and operative things; the language of those who are just above the vulgar is less pure, as flowing from what they do not in general comprehend. Hence the profusion of broken and ill-assorted metaphors, which we find in the conversation of almost all who stand in the intermediate space between the lettered and the lowest. I will go further, and venture to assert that you will find most of the expressions in daily use among ourselves to be ambiguous and vague. Your servant would say, *A man told me so:* the most learned and elegant of your acquaintance would probably say, on the same occasion, *A certain person informed me.* Here the person is not *a certain* but an *uncertain* one, and the thing told may have nothing in it of *information.* A farmer would say, *A deal of money for a galloway:* a minister of state, *A considerable sum*, speaking of the same. Reflection demonstrates clearly that, although the sum may have been the double of the value, it could not be an object of *consideration*, which word, however abused, is equivalent to *contemplation*, — another word strangely degraded and misapplied. *Certain* then is *uncertain*, and *considerable* is *inconsiderable.* These words, you cannot fail to have observed, are the signs and figures whereby we denote the very two things which, in one form or other, are the most operative on the human mind, — magnitude and truth. As *considerable* is *inconsiderable*, and *certain* is *uncertain*, so *doubt* is used for *believe;* "I *doubt* you are wrong," is said, for "*I believe* you are wrong." This is elliptical. "I come to the conclusion, or the suspicion, by doubting on points about it, that you are wrong."

Johnson. We will return, at some future time, to the metaphysical of language. The new and strange word, an *individual*, seems rather to signify a *dividual* or *par*ticular. Pray tell me now, since you have always a word in defence of the vulgar, what the fools can mean by a *dead heat*, when racers reach the goal together, and a *dead hand*, speaking of a man apparently the most alive and active: as a *dead hand* at quoits or tennis?

Tooke. Add also *dead level. Dead* is *finished*, *accomplished;* in that sense the same as *deed: deed* is *fact*, and *fact* implies *certainty.* A *dead level* is an exact one.

Johnson. *Deed* however is no adjective.

Tooke. Nor is *net*, nor is *life;* yet we say a *net*-income and a *life*-interest. I have sometimes thought that *net* might be *neat.* I am however more inclined to believe that it means *purse* in this instance, a thing of the same texture; and my reason is that we say ordinarily, "He *netted* so much." Since you have admitted me into court as advocate for the vulgar, let me remark that we laugh at those who pronounce an aspirate where there should be none; but are not we ourselves more ridiculous, who deliberately write it before words in which it never is pronounced? If we are to pronounce it, why put *an* to it? — as *an* honest, *an* honorable, *an* hour. The simple *a* denotes that it is wanted; as in *a* harp, *a* heart, *a* house, *a* home, *a* harness. Unprofitably do we employ *an* before words beginning with the aspirate; and much is it to be regretted that we see broken up and dissevered this household of familiar words. All that are aspirated should have *a* rather than *an* prefixed. There are other things also we often see in print, but never say: for instance, *an unicorn*, *an university*, *an use*, *an ewe*, *an yew-tree.* We properly say, *an only son;* improperly, *such an one:* because in *only* the *o* has simply its own sound, in *one* it sounds as if *w* were before it. Exactly half our vowels are occasionally consonants. Who would venture to say *an* year ago, or *an* youth, or *an yelping* cur, or *an yesterday's* newspaper?

Johnson. Proceed, sir, proceed: but I do not expect much regularity in your proceedings.

Tooke. Look on me as on a fox-hunter in the field. I cannot go straightforward continually. At one time there is a quickset hedge before me; at another there are rotten stakes; here a deep ditch, there a quagmire, and farther onward a wide morass. I will mention words for your consideration as they arise before me, and not in such order as a grammar would require. We are walking in a forest, where the climate is genial, where the soil is rich, and where the fruits are growing wild: we will not at present take the trouble to assort them. As here you find a quince next to a cedar, and there peach-blossoms dropping on a yew, so here we may catch a substantive and an adverb close together, both ready for correction.

Johnson. Have it so, and go on.

Tooke. If we write *entrance*, why not *uttrance?* than which nothing can be expressed harsher. We should always write "ent*e*rance," were it only to make a distinction between this substantive and the verb *entrànce.* Shakspeare has done it in *Macbeth:* —

"The raven himself is hoarser
That croaks the fatal ent*e*rance of Duncan
Under my battlements:"

and many other words on the same principle: for example, the verse in *All's Well that Ends Well:* —

"And lasting in her sad rememberance."

Johnson. Shakspeare has indeed thus written; but what man dares always to be right?

Tooke. *Simile* is not an English word, nor a Latin one, as a substantive. *Simily* should replace it. But of all the inelegances in pages professedly English, *fac-simile* is the vilest; worse in its conformation than its twin-brother, *fac-totum.* In our language there are other parts of speech used somewhat promiscuously. Some verbs with us are French nouns and particles united. What think you of *engross?* — *en gros.* It means in one sense, as probably you have remarked in your *Dictionary*, what is written in *thick* characters by lawyers; in another, that appropriation to themselves of what is not theirs by right: attributing to the means (the engrossing, or writing in *thick* letters) what is done by the employer of those means, the lawyer. Colloquially, and sometimes in graver business, we say, *on all sides.*

Johnson. Why not?

Tooke. How many sides have we? I should have believed that we had two only, if a certain compound did not twitch me by the skirt and lay claim to a third.

Johnson. Sir, a man has but two sides from which that expression could have been deduced; for *outside* and *inside* have nothing to do with it. They however show us that *side* in their case signifies *part;* and it has this signification when we say, *on all sides.* *Side*, in this sense, is the same as the Latin *situs*, the Italian *sito.* *Usum loquendi populo concessi.*

Tooke. *Scientiam mihi reservavi.* We have only two *halves;* yet we say on my *behalf*, on your *behalf*, and on his *behalf*, when the same matter is in litigation among three persons. Chaucer says, *On this halfe God*, — on this side of God; and *four halves*, four *sides*, as his interpreter expresses it.

Johnson. Would you, who are a stickler for propriety, use such an expression as *somehow or other*, which we hear spoken and find written continually?

Tooke. I would not; because *somehow* expresses the whole meaning, and other *how* is not English. We, who are not vulgar, say *brother-in-law*, *son-in-law*, &c., wherein we appear to vie in folly with the French and Italians, and even to exceed them. An Italian calls *cognato* what we call *brother-in-law*, neither of which is true. He is not cognate to us, nor is he a brother by the laws. The *beaufrère* of the Frenchman is ludicrous; so is the *parent;* but not so much as our *grandson*, one day old. A Frenchman must speak more ridiculously still if he would speak of a horse-shoe made of any thing but iron: as Voltaire in *Zadig:* "Des fers *d'argent* à onze deniers de fin." From the same poverty and perversion of language, he attributes *sense* to dust or clouds: "Nuages agités en *sens* contraires," meaning *direction.* There is also an odd expression for "I have it in my power," — *Je suis à même:* oddness, but not corruption, as in many of ours. We say *coadjutor* where there is only one helper. And there are expressions which in themselves are very incorrect, yet give an idea not to be mistaken: such for instance is, *Round your fireside.* You cannot be round a side.

Johnson. "Round the fire" would be better.

Tooke. Not at all. We cannot be round it in our houses, unless some of us are behind the chimney. We say, *Light the fire.* Nothing has less need of lighting. The Italians say, *Light the chimney.* Now for an impropriety or two in verbs. *Originate*, a deponent, is become active. People of fashion say, *He originated the measure.*

Johnson. Scholars will always say, *The measure originated from him.*

Tooke. There is another word which we use improperly. We say, "Such a person was *executed* for robbery:" now the *person* is *prosecuted*, the *sentence executed.* One would imagine that *executioner* should designate the *judge*, him who executes the laws; not him who executes only one decision of them: but in our jurisprudence we have the hangman so perpetually before us that the expression is accountable and reasonable. *Execution* then stands with us for *juridical death*, and not for the completion of any other sentence. We employ it again on the seizure of goods under a warrant.

Johnson. Within the last year or two, I have heard the expression, "a man of *talent*," instead of, "a man of *talents*:" and I am informed by my friend, Sir Joshua Reynolds, who quickly discerns an inelegance and strongly disapproves an innovation, that an *artist* now signifies a *painter*, and *art*, *painting* exclusively.*

Tooke. Ignorant people, I myself have remarked, are beginning to speak so: the fashion cannot continue. We might as well call a Doctor of Physic a doctor of rhubarb, and a Doctor of Laws a doctor of subpœnas. And yet we smile at the expressions of the vulgar. You would think me vulgar, if I called a man a *desperate* fool, or a house a *desperate* big house.

Johnson. Ay, indeed I should.

Tooke. Come along, my learned and affable preceptor. Be it as pleasant for you to be released from the columns of a dictionary as for me to escape from the chapters of a grammar. We will expatiate freely over the wide and varied field before us, here trampling down a troublesome thistle, and there raising up again a neglected flower. We will make hay while the sun shines; and I perceive already that the clouds are rolling off. We will toss it about, lightly and easily; which is the true meaning of the word *discuss;* we will let in plentifully light and air, and inhale a fresh fragrance at every heaving of the rake. Others may cart it, lay it on the stack, press it, trim it, truss it, and carry it to market. Even if I should assist you but little, think it somewhat to have drawn around you so many steadfast and inquiring eyes, so many fair heads, each radiant with its circle of glory, like angels about some beatified saint.

Johnson. Don't play the fool.

Tooke. Alas! it is the only game I have ever learned to play: but I dislike to play it single-handed. Come along,

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* Since the time of Johnson, the establishment of an academy for painting in England has much infected our language. If we find five metaphors in a chapter, four of them are upon trust from the oil-and-color man.

Doctor! We have many words implying intensity, now gone or going out of use among the middling classes, and lapsed entirely from the highest. Such as *mighty* (for *very*), which exactly corresponds with the Latin *valde;* and *desperate*, in the same sense, for which they had a relative in *insanus*, used by Cicero before the senate in designating the terraces of Clodius, which he calls "*insanas* substructiones." The vulgar now use *mortally* as Cicero uses *immortally*, an expression of intensity and vehemence. "Te a Cæsare quotidie plus diligi *immortaliter* gaudio."

Johnson. There is hardly any writer who does not sacrifice elegance to force, when he has occasion. Addison says that Virgil "*strained hard* to outdo Lucretius in the description of the plague."

Tooke. Addison, in the same sentence, which I remember for its singular weakness, says also, that, "If the reader would see with what success, he may find it at large in Scaliger."

Johnson. He might.

Tooke. Could he not find it equally at large in Lucretius and Virgil; or is Scaliger nearer at hand, presenting a more authentic document than the original? Addison is not only an inconsiderate and superficial critic, but is often vulgar and mean: he is sometimes ungrammatical. He is both in that verse by which he has expressed how much more useful the senate was in Thessaly than at Rome.

Johnson. I remember none such.

Tooke.

"The *corps* of half her senate
Manure the fields of Thessaly."

The grammatical fault would not have been committed, if the word *corps* had been written, as it should be, with a final *e.* In his *Poem to the King* he hath several times used the word *corps* in the plural. On the contrary he has added *s* to the word *seraphim.* The bathos was never so well illustrated by Swift, as it might have been if he had taken his examples of it from Addison alone. What think you of this? —

"Thus Ætna, when in fierce eruption *broke*,
Fills heaven with ashes . . and the earth with smoke."

Look now at his *Saint Cecilia.* The imbecility of the first line we will pass over: in the second, where is the difference between the voice and the accents? —

> "Cecilia's name does all our numbers grace,
> From every voice the tuneful accents fly."

What does the word *it* relate to, in the next? — certainly not to *the accents*, probably not to *voice*, for the *every* stands in the way: —

> "In soaring trebles now *it* rises high,
> And now it sinks and dwells upon the base."

Doctor, I am a dealer in words, a *word-fancier;* excuse me then if I premise to you, in the spirit of trades and callings, the importance I attach to mine.

Johnson. Let us hear what you have to say. Wisdom is founded on words; on the right application of them.

Tooke. We have two which we use indifferently; *on* and *upon.* It appears to me that those who study elegance, by which I always mean precision and correctness, may give a specimen here. I would say, *upon a tower:* on the same principle I would say, *on a marsh.* There would indeed be no harm in saying, *on a tower;* but there would be an impropriety in saying, *upon a marsh;* for *up*, whether we are attentive or inattentive, whether we have been a thousand times wrong or never, means *somewhat high*, somewhat to which we ascend. I should speak correctly if I said, "Doctor Johnson *flew on* me;" incorrectly if I said, "He *fell upon* me." Custom is a rule for every thing but contradiction. We have hardly three writers of authority.

Johnson. How, sir! hardly three! People of your cast in politics are fond of vilifying our country. Is this your Whigship?

Tooke. Whigship it is, indeed: but not mine. Consider me as holding out a cake of meal and honey to appease you, when I bring to your recollection that the Romans have but one. For, however great is the genius of Sallustius and Livius and Tacitus, faults have been detected in their style by those who could judge better of it than we can. Almost every elegant verse, almost every harmonious sentence in poetry and prose among the Romans, was written within half a century. The comic authors were imitators of the Greeks;

nothing national is to be found in Plautus himself, in whose pieces every sentence bears the impression of its Attic mint. The great work of Lucretius and the greater of Ovid were the first and last deserving the name of poems, great as was the vigor and high the spirit of Ennius. Judging by the language, one would imagine that several centuries had intervened between them; yet the same reader might have been living the day when each was edited. The most beautiful flowers grow in clusters. Lucretius, Catullus, and Calvus, the loss of whose works is the greatest that Latinity has sustained; then Virgil, Ovid, Horace, and Cassius of Parma, the next great loss; for desirous as every man must be to recover the rest of Cicero and Livius, yet he perceives that there is enough of them before him to judge of their genius quite correctly; the remainder would afford him only the same pleasure as what he enjoys. In the lost poets the sources of it are cut off altogether: they can afford us no delight, and we can render them no justice.

Johnson. Addison has exhausted your stock.

Tooke. I had forgotten him again. Since however you bring him back to me, I will endeavor to prove that he has exhausted neither my justice nor my patience. His spelling is villanous: *coffy-house*, *bin* (for been), *evry*, *instanc'd*, *inclin'd.* He is fond of the word *hint*, which, as a substantive, no poet has used, or ever will use.

"Music can noble hints impart."

What is merely a hint, can hardly be noble.

"The Almighty listens to a tuneful tongue,
And seems well pleased and courted with a song."

If these lines had been translated from Voltaire, you would have cried out against his impiety. I know not your opinion of Chaucer.

Johnson. I do not read what I should read with difficulty.

Tooke. Addison says of him, —

"In vain he jests in his unpolished strain,
And tries to make his readers laugh in vain."

The verses are a tautology, and the remark an untruth. In his observations on Cowley there is a bold conceit, which I think must have been supplied by a better poet: —

"He more had pleased us had he pleased us less."

This, if it is nonsense, is more like the nonsense of Dryden than of Addison, and is such as conveys an idea. Here comes *hint* again: —

"What muse *but* thine can equal *hints* inspire."

To make it English, we must read some other word than *but.*

"And plays in *more unbounded* verse," &c.

Unbounded has in itself the force of a superlative, and cannot admit the comparative *more.* On Milton he expresses your sentiments, but not as you would have expressed them: —

"Oh had the poet ne'er profaned his pen
To varnish o'er the guilt of faithless men,
His other works *might* have deserved applause,
But now the language can't support the cause."

Johnson. I confess that here he has reversed the matter, and that his own cause cannot support his language.

Tooke. What has *the cause* to do with the *other* works? He might forsooth have succeeded in scenes of grandeur, if he *never* had written in defence of the Commonwealth. It is indeed time that Addison should "*bridle in his struggling muse.*"

Johnson. Sir, let us call the hostler and put her into the stable for the night. She has a good many blemishes, and winces more than one would have suspected from her sleek and fleshy appearance.

Tooke. She gives some indication too of having been among the vetches.

Johnson. To be grave on it, metaphor is inapplicable to personification.

Tooke. Hurd is among the most conceited writers of the present day. He has imitated in prose the metaphor so justly ridiculed in these verses of Addison. In his *Dialogue on Sincerity*, he represents Waller saying, "After a few wanton circles, as it were to *breathe* and exercise my *muse*, *I drew her in* from these amusements to a stricter *manage.*"

Johnson. His criticisms on others are usually sound and sensible. In his manners he is courtly; but in his language he mistakes vulgarity for ease, and inaccuracy for freedom. I remember an instance of his employing that word *manage* ambiguously. Instead of leaving it French he must give it an English spelling. With an English spelling it ought to have an English meaning, which it has not, but quite the contrary. His words are, "To the Hollanders indeed she could *talk big;* and it was not her humor to *manage* those over whom she had gained an ascendant." Now surely this expresses the very reverse of what the learned prelate wished to say. "*Look big*" recurs just below; and soon after, "much *indevoted* to the court," and "misconceived *of*," and "a *great means* of the hierarchical *greatness*." *Means* is plural. "To both your *satisfactions*," for "to the satisfaction of you both." Since you have mentioned Dryden, let me remark to you that his spelling is negligent. He writes *look'd*, *traduc'd*, *describ'd*, *supply'd*, *assur'd*, *polish'd*, *civiliz'd*. In his preface to the translation of the *Pastorals*, we find "Is there any thing more *sparkish* and better humor'd than Venus *her* addressing her son," &c. And he spells *icicles* "ycicles."

"Are these the limbs for *y*cicles to tear."

Tooke. He is rather to be followed in his *cou'd* and *wou'd* and *shou'd;* because so it is, and so it was then, pronounced. Addison too has written the same words in the same manner. I wish he had sanctioned by his authority more of our usages, and older and better. But our vicious spelling, and every thing else that is vicious in language, is likely to deepen; for every fresh shoal of novelists raises up some muddiness and wriggles against some weed. Of all the absurdities that ever were compressed into one word, surely the greatest is in the word *chiselled* when applied to features. If they who employ it mean to signify a fineness and delicacy, let them be taught that the chisel does only the rougher work, and that the polish is given by attrition. There is no such a thing in existence as a man or a woman; they are turned into *persons* and *individuals*. Nothing is given or granted; every thing is *accorded*. Weapons are out of use: but a pistol or a sword is become an *arm*.

Johnson. Very true. And soldiers are not encamped;

they are *biv — biv* — do pronounce the word; you have flexible organs, and can pronounce the hardest in *Gulliver's Travels*. As for spelling it, I set the two Universities at defiance.

Tooke. I hear, Doctor, what any one may easily suppose, that your acquaintance is greatly sought among the ladies. Now, for their benefit, and for the gentlemen too who write novels and romances, I would request you to exert your authority in repressing the term, *our hero*. These worthy people seem utterly unaware that the expression turns their narrative into ridicule. Even on light and ludicrous subjects, it destroys that illusion which the mind creates to itself in fiction; and I have often wished it away when I have found it in Fielding's *Tom Jones*, although used jocularly. While we are interested in a story, we wish to see nothing of the author or of ourselves.

Johnson. I detest, let me tell you, your difficulties and exceptions, your frivolity and fastidiousness; I have employed the word myself. You admit one great writer in one language! three or four in another! — pray, how many do you allow to Greece?

Tooke. I would not interrupt you, Doctor, thinking it of all things the most indecorous. England has many great writers, Rome has many; but languages do not retain their purity in the hands even of these. Whenever I think of Greece, I think with astonishment and awe; for the language and the nation seem indestructible. Long before Homer, and from Homer to Epictetus, there must have been an uninterrupted series of admirable authors, although we have lost the earliest of them, both before the poet and after. For no language can hold its breath one whole century: it becomes, if not extinct, very defective and corrupted, if no great writer fosters it and gives it exercise in that period. What a variety of beauty, what a prodigality and exuberance of it in the Greek! Even in its last age it exists in all its freshness. The letter which the mother of Saint Chrysostom addressed to that enthusiast in his youth is far more eloquent, far more powerful in thought and sentiment, than any thing in Xenophon or Plato. That it is genuine cannot be doubted; for it abounds in tenderness which saints never do, and is concise, which Chrysostom is not.

Johnson. Greece ought to be preserved and guarded by the rulers of the world as a cabinet of gems, open and belonging to them all. Whatever is the fate of other countries, whatever changes may be introduced, whatever laws imposed, whatever tributes exacted, she should preserve her lineaments uneffaced. Her ancient institutions and magistracies should be sanctioned to her, in gratitude for the inestimable blessings she has conferred on us. There is no more danger that republicanism would be contagious from it, than from a medal of Cimon or Epaminondas. To Greece is owing the conversation we hold together; to Greece is owing the very city in which we hold it, — its wealth, its power, its equity, its liberality. These are among her earlier benefits: her later are not less. We owe to her the better part of that liturgy by which the divine wrath (let us hope) may be averted from the offences of our prosperity.

Tooke. I would rather see this regeneration, than Viscount Corinth or Marquis Lacedæmon, than conduct to her carriage the Duchess Œnoanda, or even than dance with Lady Ogygia or Lady Peribœa. We may expect the worthy baronet, Sir Acamas Erechthyoniades, High Sheriff of Mycenæ, if more fashionable systems should prevail, to be created Lord Lieutenant and Custos Rotulorum of that county.

Johnson. How much better and how much easier is it to remove the dirt and rubbish from around this noble statue, and to fix on it again the arm that is broken off and lies under it, than to carve it anew into some Gothic form, and to set it up in the weedy garden of an ignorant and drunken neighbor!

Tooke. The liberation of Greece is the heirloom of our dreams, and comes not under the cognizance even of imagination when awake. To suppose that she could resist the power of Turkey one year, would be to suppose her more valiant and heroic than she ever was. If this were possible, the most despotic governments, the most friendly to her enslaver, the most indifferent to glory, the most deaf to honor, the very dead to Christianity, would lend an arm to support and save her. Nothing could be more politic, for England in particular, than to make her what Rhodes was formerly, what Malta should now be, — equipped if not for the faith, equipped and always under sail against piracy; and religion would not induce her, as it would the knights of those islands, to favor the Catholics in case of war.

Johnson. Here our political views converge. Publish your thoughts; proclaim them openly: such as these you may.

Tooke. It would cost me three thousand pounds to give them the requisite weight; and I believe there are some other impediments to my entrance into the House of Commons. Nothing is fitted to the hands of a king's minister but what is placed in them by a member of that honorable house. They take my money, which serves them little, while my advice, which might do some good, they would reject disdainfully. As where there is omniscience there is omnipotence, so wisdom (we seem to think) is always in proportion to power. A great man feels no want of it; and faulty arguments are only to be discovered through a hole in the dress.

Johnson. If your observations were always as just and your arguments as innocent, I never should decline your conversation; but, on the contrary, I should solicit from you a catalogue of such peculiarities and defects as a profound insight into our language, and a steady investigation of its irregularities and intricacies, have enabled you to remark.

Tooke. And now, Doctor Johnson, you are at last in good-humor; I hope to requite your condescension by an observation more useful than any I have yet submitted to you. Annibal Caracci, I know not whether in advice or in reproof, said to a scholar, *What you do not understand you must darken.* Are not we also of the Bologna school, my dear Doctor? Do not we treat men and things in general as Caracci would have the canvas treated? What we cannot so well manage or comprehend, we throw into a corner or into outer darkness. I do not hate, believe me, nor dislike you for your politics: whatever else they prove, they prove your constancy and disinterestedness. Nor do I supplicate you for a single one more of those kind glances which you just now vouchsafed me. The fixedness of your countenance, frowning as it is, shows at least that you attend to me, which, from a man of your estimation in the world, is no slight favor. Contented as I ought to be with it, I would yet entreat for others in the same condition, that you may be pleased to consider those writers whose sentiments are unpopular, as men walking away spontaneously from the inviting paths of Fortune, and casting up the sum of an account which is never to be paid or presented.

Johnson. I did not think there was so much wisdom in you.

Tooke. Nor was there until this conversation and this strong hand created it.

Johnson. How! have I then shaken hands with him? and so heartily?

◆

SECOND CONVERSATION.

Tooke. I am lying in my form, a poor timid hare, and turning my eyes back on the field I have gone through: has not Doctor Johnson a long lash to start me with?

Johnson. Take your own course.

Tooke. Expect then a circuitous and dodging one. Our hospitable friend, by inviting me so soon again to meet you, proves to me his high opinion of your toleration and endurance.

Johnson. Sir, we can endure those who bring us information and are unwilling to obtrude it.

Tooke. I can promise the latter only. We are two somnambulists who have awakened each other by meeting. Let us return to our old quarters, and pick up words, as before, now our eyes are open.

Johnson. Is your coat-sleeve well furnished with little slips and scraps, as it was when we met last?

Tooke. I am much afraid that I may have forgotten what I then brought forward; and if by chance I should occasionally make the same remark over again on the same word, I must bespeak your indulgence and pardon.

Johnson. I wish, sir, you had not bowed to me in that manner when you spoke your last words: such an act of courtesy brings all the young ladies about us. They cannot be much interested by our conversation.

Tooke. That must entirely depend on you. But as our language, like the Greek, the Latin, and the French, may be purified and perfected by the ladies, I hope you will interest them in the discussion, to which this evening I bring only slight materials.

You frown on them, Doctor! but you would not drive them away; and they know it. They fear your frown no more than the sparrows and linnets, in old times, feared the scythe and other implements of the garden god.

"Hanged, drawn, and quartered." Such is the sequence of words employed in the sentence on traitors.

Johnson. And, sir, are you here to remark it?

Tooke. It seems so; and not without the need.

Johnson. Traitors must first have been *drawn* to the place of punishment.

Tooke. True; and hence a vulgar error in the learned. A sportsman will tell you that a hare is *drawn* when its entrails are taken out. The traitor was *drawn* surely enough, to the block or gallows; but the law always states its sentences clearly, although its provisions and enactments not so. The things to be suffered come in due order. Here the criminal is first hanged, then *drawn*, then his body is cut into quarters.

Johnson. I believe you may be right. You have not answered me whether you come supplied with your instruments of torture, — your grammatical questions.

Tooke. I have many of these in my memory, and some on the back of a letter. Permit me first to ask whether we can say, *I had hear?*

Johnson. You mean to say *heard.*

Tooke. No; I mean the words, *I had hear.*

Johnson. Why ask me so idle a question?

Tooke. Because I find in the eighth chapter of *Rasselas,* "I *had* rather *hear* thee dispute." The intervention of *rather* cannot make it more or less proper.

Johnson. Sir, you are right. I hope you do not very often find such inaccuracies in my writings. Can you point out another?

Tooke. I should do it with less pleasure than ease; and I doubt whether there is one in fifty pages, which is indeed no moderate concession, no ordinary praise: for we English are less attentive to correctness and purity of style than any other nation, ancient or modern, that ever pretended to elegance or erudition.

Johnson. Sir, you have reason on your side.

Tooke. In having Doctor Johnson with me.

Johnson. I have observed the truth of what you say, and I wonder I never have published my remark.

Tooke. Permit me, my dear sir, to partake of your wonder on this subject; you have excited mine on so many. But since you authorize me to adduce an instance of your incorrectness, for which I ought to be celebrated among the great discoverers —

Johnson. No flattery, sir! no distortion of body! Stand upright and speak out.

Tooke. The second paragraph in *Rasselas* is this: "Rasselas was the fourth son of the mighty Emperor in whose dominions the father of waters begins his course; whose bounty," &c. Now *whose* must grammatically appertain to "the mighty Emperor." But we soon discover by the context that it belongs to "the father of waters."

Johnson. I am afraid you are correct.

Tooke. My dear sir, let us never be afraid of any man's possessing this advantage, but always of his having fraud and falsehood. Reason will come over to our side if we pay her due respect when we find her on the side of an adversary. But I am not yours: let her sit between us, and let us enjoy her smiles and court her approbation.

Johnson (aside). Strange man! it is difficult to think him half so wicked as he is. But I am inclined to believe that we may be marvellously infatuated by a mountebank's civility.

Tooke. Doctor, if your soliloquy is terminated, as your turning round to me again seems to indicate, may I ask whether the Nile is legitimately the father of waters? The Ocean seems to possess a prior right: and the Eridanus has enjoyed the prescriptive title, *King of Rivers*, from collecting a greater number of streams than any known among the ancients. But the Nile, as far as the ancients knew, collected none.

Johnson. Insufferably captious!

Tooke. The captious are never insufferable where nothing is to be caught. Let us set others right as often as we can, without hurting them or ourselves. If this is to be done in either, the setting right is an expensive process.

Johnson. Begin, sir.

Tooke. We will begin our amicable engagement in the same manner as hostilities in the field are usually begun. A few straggling troops fire away first, from hedges and bushes. As far indeed as I am concerned, there will be no order throughout the whole, from first to last. Whatever the part of speech may be, it pretends to the advantages of no lineal descent, and claims no right of appointing a successor. As we appeal to the Roman laws in grammar rather than to the custom of the land, pray, why are not "resist*a*nce" and "attend*a*nce" spelled with *e*, like "resid*e*nce" and "perman*e*nce," all proceeding from participles of the same form, "resist*e*ns," "attend*e*ns," "resid*e*ns," "perman*e*ns"? We write "correspond*e*nt," "stud*e*nt," "penit*e*nt," "resid*e*nt," yet we always find "assist*a*nt."

Johnson. This, like most irregularities, arises from inattention and slovenliness, not from ignorance or perverseness. Is it not also strange that *won* should be the preterite of *win*, when "beg*u*n" is the preterite of "begin"?

Tooke. Strange, indeed. Ben Jonson uses *wun* in his comedy of *Every Man in his Humor.* So if we write *said* and *paid*, why not *staid* and *praid?* If we write *laid*, why not *allaid* and *delaid?* Now, for a substantive or two. South properly writes "begg*e*r." Waller, in the same age, "veget*a*ls," which I think is preferable to "veget*ables*." There is a reason why the word "eatables" is better spelled as at present. We want "contra*dictive*" for the person, as well as "contra*dicting*" for the thing. We had it and have lost it, while we see other old words brought into use again very indiscreetly. Among the rest the word *wend.* There is no need of it, unless in poetry. In certain new books we find *wended.* There is properly no such word: Spenser has coined it unlawfully. *Went* is the preterite of *wend*, as *lent* of *lend*, *spent* of *spend*, *bent* of *bend.*

These are among the few verbs which do not possess two forms of the preterite; the one ending in *ed*, the other in *t:* as *pass*, *passed*, *past; ceases*, *ceased*, *ceast.* There can be no such word as "pass'*d*" "ceas'*d*," though we find them printed. We write, "I talk*ed*, I walk*ed*, I march*ed*," but such words never existed, for these words never were pronounced, and the others never could be. Writing is but the sign of speech; and *such* writing is a false signal. No word ought to be so written that it cannot be pronounced; but when we have the same word before us written plainly, it is a strange perversion to reject the commodious spelling. It is as improper to write *alle*dge or *abri*dge (abrege) as *colle*dge or *knowle*dge. *Kerchief* also is wrongly spelled; it has nothing to do with "ch*i*ef." Milton writes in the *Penseroso*, —

> "Kercheft in a comely cloud."

We, in imitation of the French, say, "ten *times* as *high;*" the Italians "ten *turns*" (dieci *volte*)*:* the Romans and Greeks expressed it by the simple adverb. *Highth* has nothing to do with time: here is an ellipsis, "ten times *told*." I now proceed to a favorite word of yours, which is wrongly spelled: *allegiance.* In its present form it appears to come from *allege*, or (as we write it) *alledge;* whereas it comes from *liege*, and should be spelled "all*i*eg*e*ance."

Johnson. You have asked me many questions; let me ask you one. What think you of calling a female writer an *author*, in which the terminating syllable expresses the noun masculine?

Tooke. Since we in English have no nouns masculine by declension, I see no reason why we should not extend the privileges of those we adopt: a queen may be called a governor, and a god-mother a sponsor. I wish we had authority for terminating the words in *ess* as we have for writing others which usually end in *or.* As our English terminations in few words designate the genders, I should not hesitate.

Johnson. Do you hesitate at any thing?

Tooke. At differing in opinion from a superior.

Johnson. Superior! do you admit superiors?

Tooke. I do not admit that a ducal coronet may constitute one, nor that men can make great him whom God has made little: the attempt is foolish and impious. But whoever has improved by industry the talents his Maker has bestowed on him, to a greater amount than I have done, is my superior. If brighter wit, if acuter judgment, if more creative genius, are allotted him, I reverence in his person a greater than I am, and believe that Almighty God has granted me the sight of him and conversation with him, that I may feel at once my own wants and my own powers: that I may be at once humble and grateful.

Johnson. You? you?

Tooke (*bows*). Accept the sign of both, however inadequate the expression.

Johnson. This is really stooping to conquer. I was wrong and rude. I will not offend so again.

Tooke. I am encouraged to pursue my inquiries. What do you think of *horse-godmother* and *horse-laugh ?*

Johnson. Expressions of coarseness. The Greeks, instead of *horse*, employed *ox*. *Boumastos*, the *bumastus* of Virgil's *Georgics*, is a large species of grape: *boupais* is our *booby*.

Tooke. Very true, Doctor; but may I whisper in your ear my suspicion that the *horse* has nothing to do with the *godmother* or the *laugh ?* Indeed, I believe no animal has less the appearance of laughter, or is less liable to those outward and visible signs of sickness which sometimes are attributed to him in the comparison, "Sick as a horse." The *godmother* of the personage I whispered to you may readily be imagined a very coarse and indelicate one; her *laughter* suitable to her character; and her *house* by no means salubrious: and *horse* is designated by the possessive *s*, as in Saint Clement'*s*, Saint Paul'*s*.

Johnson. I have been looking into a few old authors for their modes of spelling; and remembering the better one of writing *stil*, and the many instances where, by being spelled with a double *l*, it might easily be mistaken for the adjective, I took the trouble to write them down. There was indeed an age in our literature when such confusion was thought a beauty. Sir Philip Sidney, in the best of his poems, says, —

"Now be *still ;* yet *still* believe me," &c.

In another poem of a later author I find, —

"Lie *still*, sweet maid, and wait the Almighty will;
Then rise unchanged and be an angel *still*."

How much better would these verses be if the first words were, —

"*Rest here*, sweet maid."

Tooke. Unquestionably. But perhaps the learned author had Sir P. Sidney in his eye, and was not undelighted with the pleasurable vices of poetry in such company.

Johnson. We need not poke into holes nor pry into corners for old expressions or old modes of spelling. They lie open, on a wide field, in full sunshine. Cowley always writes the preterites and participles *extinguisht*, *possest*, *disperst*, *refresht*, *nourisht*, *stopt*, *knockt*, *dreamt*, *burnt*, *usurpt*, *reacht*. Daniel and Drayton, among the poets; Waller, Cleaveland, and Cowley, in prose,—are the first who wrote as easily as we write at present. The only poetry I can bring to memory, which is perfectly such in regard to language as might be written at the present day, is Daniel's,—

> "I must not grieve my love, whose eyes should read
> Lines of delight," &c.

Tooke. Permit me to return with you to the verbs. To *lead* is *led* in the preterite; so should *read* be *red*. We have wisely curtailed the final *e*, and may just as wisely curtail the unnecessary reduplication of *d*: for nobody can mistake in any sentence the verb for the adjective. In such words as *amerced*, *coerced*, &c., the abbreviators of the last and present age usually omit the *e*; but the earlier wrote *amerst*, *coerst*, to designate that one syllable was added unnecessarily. I have seen letters from the historian Hume, in which he constantly writes *talkt*, *remarkt*, *lavisht*, *askt*. In his printed works, the compositor and publisher would never permit it.

Johnson. What improvement, in style or any thing else, can be expected from a free-thinker?

Tooke. Among a thousand deteriorations I remember but one improvement in writing since my childhood.

Johnson. What is that?

Tooke. Of late I have remarked that the generality of authors no longer write every substantive with a capital letter.

Johnson. It makes an unseemly appearance in the type.

Tooke. The unseemliness is not equal to the absurdity; nor does it matter whether this letter or that letter be pretty in its form, or whether it vault with its head above the surface, or dive with its feet under.

Johnson. I see indeed no reason why we should employ the capital letter in the middle of the sentence, unless in proper names, in the names of people and countries, in the months, the days, and in the appellations and attributes of the Deity.

Tooke. The French, if I may venture an opinion, are more elegant than we are in their usage, when they curtail the number of capitals.

Johnson. The wretches do not write even *Dieu* with one!

Tooke. No doubt they are very wretched in this oversight: but perhaps they believe that God is hardly to be made greater by a great letter.

Johnson. This is scoffing: I scorn to answer it. And pray, sir, in your reviling, what would you do with *Angels* and *Sirens?*

Tooke. As they happen to be present, pray ask of themselves what I should do with them, and assure them I am all compliance.

Lady to another. The impudent creature! Did you ever hear the like?

Lady in answer. How should I?—I am married.

Johnson. If you terminate your preterites and participles in *est* instead of *essed*, which you may do, as there is no innovation in it, you must, to be consistent, spell several of those ending in *ed* without the *e*, as *improv'd.*

Tooke. Certainly some others; not those: for the vowel gives here the grave sound which the syllable requires. Negligent and thoughtless writers have done it; so they have even in *amerced*, *coerced.* But if they take away a letter where it is wanted, they put one where it is not; and we continue in this extravagance when we write "worshi*pp*ers" and "counse*ll*ors," for which we have less plea than our predecessors, who wrôte "worshi*ppe*" and "couns*ell*."

Johnson. Although I agree with you on many points, after reflecting upon the matter I cannot give my assent to the Anglicising of Greek plurals, such as *phenomena*, *scholia*, *encomia*. How would you manage some Latin one?—such for instance as *genii.*

Tooke. We retain the plural *genii* when we refer to the imaginary beings of Oriental fable; that there may be a distinction between these and such real and solid ones as Doctor Johnson, which, according to our idiom and custom, we call *geniuses*. If you insist on retaining the terminations of Greek nouns, then, Doctor, the pleasing task must devolve on you of teaching ladies the Greek grammar. But if they do not accept the plurals of other languages, why should they of this? They say *signors*, and not *signori.*

Now we find ourselves dropped suddenly on designations in society, is it not wonderful that we should apply to the clergy two names so extremely different in their import as the *divine* and the *cloth?* Among the well-dressed gentlemen we may have happened to meet in society, I doubt whether a single one would be contented to be called a piece of haberdashery: and as for a *divine*, the young lady yonder, — I mean the tall and slender one, with soft, dark, pensive eyes, and eye-brows not too arched nor too definite, — is incomparably more one to my fancy than his Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Johnson. I do not see nor heed the girl.

Tooke. If you could do the one without the other, you would have more philosophy than our discourse requires.

Johnson. My worthy sir! I do request you will be somewhat more circumspect in your observations.

Tooke. Many thanks, Doctor! some of them for the advice, and others for two suggestions. *Worth* and *worthy* are subjected to the same construction. I would say, for distinction-sake, "*worth* any price," and "*worthy* of my esteem." The *of*, which is now omitted after *worthy*, would be only as wrongly added after *worth*. The other day I received a letter from a person who really can read and write rather better than you would suppose, and I found in it mar*quess* instead of mar*quis*.

Johnson. Sir, the word *marquess* will be a very proper term for *marquis* whenever, by some miraculous power, he becomes his own wife. I wonder that no writer of common sense has remarked that mar*quess* for the lady is better than mar*chioness*. My reason is plain enough: it is more proper to assimilate it to its native French than to barbarous Latin: neither the French nor the Italian authorize the form of *marchioness*.

Tooke. Would not *circumspective* be a better form than *circumspect?* as corresponding with *prospective* and *retrospective?*

Johnson. It would. I cannot but think that so irregular a locution was at first occasioned by abbreviation in manuscripts: *circumspect* would otherwise be a substantive, like *prospect* and *retrospect*. Now why do you not draw up into a regular and orderly composition these remarks?

Tooke. Even if the thing were worth it, I would never take the trouble, well knowing how impatient an English public is of any changes for the better. And yet, by some unaccountable chance, we have latterly made one improvement in our language among infinite deteriorations.

Johnson. What is it?

Tooke. The restoration of *that* or *which*, in cases of need. The omission is peculiarly observable among the dramatists; the later follow the older, and limp awkwardly in the rear. Addison and Rowe for instance, —

> "I would not hear a word
> Should lessen thee in my esteem."

And, —

> "Curse on the innovating hand attempts it."

Custom can never make English of this, because it never can make sense of it. In fact, the relative should only be omitted where a pronoun is concerned. On the other hand, the insertion of it, where it can be well avoided, is among the principal blemishes of ordinary writers. In most places I would eradicate this stiff, hard, thriftless plantain which overruns our literature.

Johnson. At some time, I doubt not, these observations will be carefully collected and duly estimated.

Tooke. The Sibylline leaves, which contain the changes of an empire, as these do of a language, were disconnected and loose. The great difference is that, although mine may be refused at their value, a light breath will not scatter and confuse them, blow it whence it may.

Johnson. Your former conversation has made me think repeatedly what a number of beautiful words there are of which we never think of estimating the value, as there are of blessings. How carelessly, for example, do we (not we, but people) say, "I am delighted to *hear from you.*" No other language has this beautiful expression, which, like some of the most lovely flowers, loses its charms for want of close inspection. When I consider the deep sense of these very simple and very common words, I seem to hear a voice coming from afar through the air, breathed forth, and entrusted to the care of the elements, for the nurture of my sympathy.

Tooke. Since we are become a learned nation, not only the words we have cast aside, but also those we have substituted in the place of them, are mostly injudicious: and such others as we have taken the trouble to construct are unskilful botches. What think you of the word *scientific*, which doubtless some *scientific* man brought into the world?

Johnson. What should I think about it?

Tooke. That it is *unscientific.* Now *fic* comes from *fingere*, and means *making*. *Prolific* is *making* a progeny: *scientific* is not *making* a science, but adding to the improvement or advancement of one already made.

There are other forms so long and so well established in the mind, that we would hardly alter them if we could. For instance, *eve* and *evening* are the same: so are *morn* and *morning*. Christmas eve is the *evening* or (largely used) the *day* before Christmas. Yet we should be stared at if we said *Monday evening* or *eve*, meaning Tuesday. Nevertheless, if we were always bound by strict analogy, we should speak so. I would be guided by analogy no farther than where I am in danger of being led into ambiguities by neglecting it. A man would be stared at who should call *this morning*, *to-morrow*.

Among the phrases lately brought back again into use is the very idle and inefficient *ever and anon*. An apparition at once so grave and so shadowy makes an unseemly figure in the frippery and tinsel of a circulating library.

Johnson. I wonder that the expression was *ever* formed; and that, having been formed, it was not *anon* exposed and left to perish.

Tooke. But the oddest expression in our language is *many a one*. The Italians have *tutti e tre:* for *all three*, "all *and* three," *tutti e quattro*, &c.

Johnson. We have also a strange expression in *never* for *no;* thus, "*ne'er a one of them.*"

Tooke. *Ne'er* in this instance has no reference to time, but properly to person: *ne'er* here is an awkward contraction of *nowhere*. This is intelligible to all, however few at first sight may be able to account for it. Ambiguity is worse than stiffness: but stiffness is bad enough, and much more common. Nothing of this kind in our authors is frequenter than the subjunctive: "if it *be*, unless it *be:*" which ought never to be used where the doubt is not very strong; for it should be a very strong doubt to supplant idiom. Our best writers use *who* and *whom*, only in speaking of intellectual beings. We do not properly say *the tree who*, *the horse who;* in fable however it would be right, for there they reason and speak.

Johnson. The French and other moderns, I believe, never omit those words of theirs whereby they express the relative *which* or *that.*

Tooke. So we are taught, and in regard to the French, truly. But in the best of the Italian writers *che* is omitted. Machiavelli, whom you will allow me to quote where politics sit idle, has omitted it twice in one sentence: "Monstrale l'amore le porti, dicale il bene le vuoi." *Mandrag.* 4. "I am happy to find from the letter you wrote me, that you enjoy good health." Here *that* is omitted rightly after letter, which it could not well be between the words *me* and *you.* The rejection of it in the proper place is a cause of peculiar elegance, for it bears heavily on our language. The Romans were fortunate to avoid it by means of the *infinitive* of their verbs; and perhaps more fortunate still in having so many words to express *but*, another sad stumbling-block to us. Our language is much deformed by the necessity of its recurrence; and I know not any author who has taken great pains to avoid it where he could.

Johnson. Nothing is right with you: in language as in government we yield to Greeks and Romans. One would imagine that Addison, a Whig, might please you.

Tooke. Doctor, I never ask or consider or care of what party is a good man or a good writer. I have always been an admirer of Addison, and the oftener I read him, I mean his prose, the more he pleases me. Perhaps it is not so much his style, which however is easy and graceful and harmonious, as the sweet temperature of thought in which we always find him, and the attractive countenance, if you will allow me the expression, with which he meets me upon every occasion. It is very remarkable, and therefore I stopped to notice it, that not only what little strength he had, but all his grace and ease, forsake him when he ventures into poetry: he is even coarse and abject, and copies the grammatical faults of his predecessors without copying any thing else of their manner, good or bad. Were I inclined to retaliate on you, I might come against you in the rear of others, and throw my stone at you on the side of Gray; and where you would least expect it for indulgence. Prejudiced or unprejudiced against him, I wonder you did not catch at the beard of his bard streaming *like a meteor*. He did not take the idea from the *Moses* of Michel Angelo, nor from the *Padre Eterno* of Raphael in his Vision of Ezekiel, but from the *Hudibras* of Butler.

> "This *hairy meteor* did denounce
> The fall of sceptres and of crowns."

Here we have the very words.

Until you pointed out to me my partiality for the Greeks and Romans, I never had suspected it, having always thought ten pages in Barrow worth all their philosophy put together, and finding more wisdom and thought in him, distinct from theology, than in any of them, excepting Aristoteles. If his eloquence is somewhat less pure than that of Demosthenes and Thucydides, who have reached perfection, his mind is as much more capacious and elevated as the Sun is than the Moon and Mercury.

Johnson. It is better and pleasanter to talk generally on great and high subjects than minutely. Who would examine that could expatiate?

Tooke. None can expatiate safely who do not previously examine; and we are not always to consider in our disquisitions what is pleasantest, but sometimes what is usefullest. I wonder, in matters of reason, how any thing little or great can excite ill humor: for as many steps as they lead us toward reason, just so many, one would think, they should lead us away from passion. Why should these dry things have discomposed you? If I ride a broomstick, must I like a witch raise a storm? In reality a great deal of philosophy, a great deal not only of logic but of abstruse and recondite metaphysics, will be found in etymology: the part least pleasing to you in our conversation. I do not wonder that such men as Varro and Cæsar studied it and wrote upon it; but I doubt whether the one or the other went very deeply into the business. It is astonishing that the more learned among the Greeks knew absolutely nothing of it. Admirably as they used the most beautiful of languages, they cared no more about its etymologies than a statuary cares about the chemical properties of his marble.

Doctor, in your travels, did you ever happen to see gossamer?

Johnson. In my English travels, I saw it formerly in Needwood Forest, five miles from Lichfield: latterly my travels were in Scotland, where there was no plant to support it.

Tooke. I am unwilling to take so great a freedom as to contest a derivation with you personally, but permit me to suggest the possibility that many words in what is called low Latin, which resemble our English words, are not their parents. Certainly there is a certain resemblance of *gossipium* and *gossimer.* But *gorse*, which in many parts of the country is also called *furze* or *whin*, appears to me to be its root. Chaucer and Shakspeare spell it *gossamour;* Drayton of the same county and age, *gossamere.* Now, if we consider that the common people universally, and the greater part of others, treat the letter *r* very gently, and that you never heard a farmer call *gorse* otherwise than *goss;* if you then consider how large a number of our plants take their names from sentiments, — perhaps you may incline to think it possible that *gossamour* is *gorse's-love*, *gors-amour.* For love seems to be nowhere more faithful than between the plant and its daily visitant in spring, summer, and autumn: on no other do you see it so frequently. The name was given in the first incubation of the French upon the Saxon.

Johnson. Sir, this is fanciful.

Tooke. I am invested with a new quality by the partiality of Doctor Johnson. You mention in your *Dictionary* the word *gossipium* as of low Latinity. I find it nowhere but in Pliny; and he was certainly a man of the highest rank and best education. He mentions it as bearing cotton, which is very different from the *gorse.* There are a few words (but *gossipium* is not one of them) which we believe to be of the latest Latinity, and which in reality are of the earliest. The readers of Apuleius are taught that several of his words are provincial, and of very base and very recent coinage; whereas they were carried into Africa with the first Roman settlers, and retained their vitality in that country when they had lost it at Rome: just as several of our noblest families are extinct in England, but branch off vigorously in Ireland. The Romans called a goose a gander; they forgot the female name:

the Italians in country places never lost it; and to this day *auca* is called *occa*.

Johnson. I should like to know whether the man is in earnest; but that I never shall.

In return for this illusory and unsubstantial film, I will present to you a curiosity in the Latin: for surely it is curious that the Romans should have used two words of origin quite contrary for the same thing. To *promise* was not only *promittere* but *recipere;* the authority is Cicero.

Tooke. The reason is plain.

Johnson. As you are fond of reasons and innovations, I would consign to you willingly two or three words on which to exercise your ingenuity. I would allow you to write *monsterous* and *wonderous* with an *e*, on the same principle as we write *treacherous* and *ponderous*.

Tooke. Liberally offered, and gratefully accepted. Encroachment may sometimes be the follower of kindness: am I going too far in asking that *rough*, *tough*, *sough*, *enough*, may be guided by *bluff*, *rebuff*, *cuff?* Why should not *cough* be spelled *coff;* why not *dough* and *although*, *dow* and *altho*, — for the benefit of strangers and learners, to say nothing of economy in letters; the only kind of economy on which we reformers can ever hope to be heard? As there is also a cry against the letter *s*, I would remove it from *onwards*, *towards*, *forwards*, *backwards*, *afterwards*, where it is improper, however sanctioned by the custom of good authors; and I would use it only where the following word begins with *d* or *t*, for the sake of euphony. On the same principle I approve of *saith*, &c., instead of *says*, &c., where the next word begins with *s*, or *z*, or *ce* and *ci*. Hobbes is the last who writes with this termination, and neither he nor his predecessors abstained from it before another *th*. Persons very unlearned, such as Swift and others, have from their natural acuteness perceived the utility of *fixing*, as they call it, our language.

Johnson. Sir, I have been patient: I have heard you call Swift a very unlearned man. Malignity of Whiggism! I give him up to you, however: he was not very learned. But you ought to have spared and favored him; for he was irreverential to the great, and to his God.

Tooke. An ill-tempered, sour, supercilious man may nevertheless be a sycophant; and he was one. He flattered some of the worst men that ever existed, and maligned some of the best. Of all inhumanities and cruelties, his toward two women who reposed their affections on so undeserving an object was in its nature the worst and the most unprovoked. But, Doctor, I am inclined to believe that God is as fond of his lively children as of his dull ones; and would as willingly see them give their pocket-money to the indigent and afflicted, as offer their supplications or even their thanks to him. I may be mistaken: so many wiser men have been, that in all these matters I deliver my opinion, but do not inculcate nor insist upon it. When I spoke of Swift and others as very unlearned, I meant in the etymologies and diversities of our language. Swift wrote admirably.

Johnson. Yes, sir: and was more original than you and all your tribe.

Tooke. I am willing that a Tory should for ever be an original, and be incapable of having a copyist. But, when I was younger, I read Swift as often as perhaps any other may have done; not for the sake of his thoughts and opinions, but of his style, which I would carry with me and employ.

Johnson. Addison's is better.

Tooke. What I admire in Addison I cannot so easily make use of. If you or I attempted to imitate the mien and features of a Cupid or a Zephyr, I doubt whether we should quite succeed. Perhaps when we meet again, if that pleasure is reserved for me, I may carry in the spacious sleeves of this coat seventy or eighty expressions culled from Addison, at which you will shake your head. At present let me treat you with one sentence, the only one of them I can perfectly recollect. "When we had done eating *ourselves*, the knight called a waiter to him, and *bid* him carry the remainder to the waterman," &c. Now, when they had done *eating themselves*, the waterman would hardly thank them for the remainder, and probably their voices would be but little intelligible to the waiter. Swift is not so original as you think him. He was a peruser of rare books; for, zealous as he appears in favor of the classics, he liked nothing that was not strange. In one of his searches probably after such reading, he tells us he first met Harley. I do not mention Cyrano de Bergeraç, and some others who have given him ideas on the ground-plan of his works; but I mean to bring you where you may find the thoughts. The most beautiful of them is owing to Plutarch. That simile of the geographers and sands of Africa is taken from the first sentence in the *Life of Theseus*. I have traced a great number of his other fancies and reflections, in writers less known and less esteemed.

Johnson. Plutarch has many good ones.

Tooke. Yes, Doctor; and although his style is not valued by the critics, I could inform them that there are in Plutarch many passages of exquisite beauty in regard to style, derived perhaps from authors more ancient.

Johnson. Inform them of nothing, sir, if you wish to live peaceably. Let them take from you, but do not offer it. They will pass over your freshest thoughts as if they had been long and intimately known to them, and display your abstruser (to them incomprehensible) as the only ones worthy of remark.

Tooke. Among these hogs of Westphalia there is not one with a snout that can penetrate into my enclosure, prompt as they are to batten on it and bespatter it, and to trample it down as they grunt and trot along. Doctor, you have been keeping admirable time to my words with your head and body.

Johnson. Is that sentence yours? I like the period.

Tooke. Let any one claim it whom it suits as well: I grant and resign it freely. Periods I willingly throw away; but not upon things like these. A wise man is shown clearly, distinctly, and advantageously, when he is seen walking patiently by the side of an unwise one; but only on some occasions and to some extent. To quarrel on the road, to twitch him by the coat at every slip he makes, and to grow irritated in irritating him, proves to the unwise man that there is one in the world unwiser than he.

Johnson. And now, sir, what plan have you for fixing our language?

Tooke. This is impossible in any; but it is possible to do much, and an authority like yours would have effected it by perpetuating the orthography. On the contrary, I observe in your *Dictionary* some quotations in which the words are spelled differently from what I find them in the original; nor have you admitted all those in Littleton, who compiled his *Latin Dictionary* at a recent period.

Johnson. First, I wrote the words as people now receive them; then, as to Littleton, many of his are vulgar.

Tooke. The more English for that. No expression, be it only free from indecency, is so vulgar that a man of learning and genius may not formerly have used it; but there are many so frivolous and fantastical that they cannot, to the full extent of the word, ever become vulgar. There are but four places where such bad language is tolerated and acknowledged, — the cock-pit, the boxing-ring, the race-course, and the House of Commons.

Johnson. I could wish our Senate to have deserved as well of ours as the Roman did of theirs. Illiterate men, and several such are among the correspondents of Cicero, write with as much urbanity and purity as himself; and it is remarkable that the only one of them defective in these qualities is Marcus Antonius the triumvir. But pray give me some more instances in which the spelling should be improved.

Tooke. Many must escape me, and others are but analogical: I will then bring forward only those which occur principally. The word which has just escaped my lips, *occur*, is written improperly with a single *r*. The same may be remarked on the finals of *rebel*, *compel*, &c.

Johnson. Why should the compound have this potency? It would be more reasonable (however little so) to write *sel* and *fil*, as B. Jonson and many others did; because there could be no ambiguity in the pronunciation.

Tooke. On the same system, if system it can be called, we write *aver*, *demur*, *appal*, *acquit*, *permit*, *refit*, *confer*, &c. If these were printed as they ought to be, strangers would more easily know that the accent is on the final syllable. I wish we wrote *drole* instead of *droll*, *drolery* instead of *drollery*, which are discountenanced by the French, and unsupported by our pronunciation. In like manner, why not *controle?* In the time of Elizabeth good authors wrote *vittals:* and long afterward *applie*, *allie*, *relie*, which we should do if we wrote *lie*. *Haughty* and *naughty* may drop some useless letters, and appear characteristically *hauty* and *nauty: heinous* is *hainous* by descent.

We ourselves in some instances have lost the right accent of words. In my youth, he would have been ridiculed who placed it upon the first syllable of *confiscated*, *contemplative*, *conventicle*,* at which the ear revolts: in many other compounds we thrust it thus back with equal precipitancy and rudeness. We have sinned and are sinning most grievously against our fathers and mothers. We shall "rèpent," and "rèform," and "rèmonstrate," and be "rèjected" at last.

Johnson. Certainly it does appear strange that the man who habitually says "dèmonstrate" should never say "rèmonstrate."

Tooke. Sackville, a great authority, writes, —

> "Tossed and tòrmented with tedious thought."

Milton's exquisite ear saved him in general from harshness. He writes, "Travèrsing the colure." How much better is aggràndize than àggrandize! Dryden, in the *Annus Mirabilis*, writes, —

> "Instructed ships shall sail to quick commèrce."

We have suffered to drop away from us the beautiful and commodious word bequeathed to our language by this author, the word *painture*. Surely, it corresponds more closely with *sculpture* and *architecture* than the participle we convert into a substantive to replace it. On the same principle, why not *dancery* for *dancing*, as we find it in Chapman? How refreshing, how delicious, is a draught of pure home-drawn English, from a spring a little sheltered and shaded, but not entangled in the path to it, by antiquity!

Among the words of which the accent has been transposed to their disadvantage are *confessor* and *convex*, from the second to the first. *Sojourn* is by no means inharmonious if you place the accent where it ought to be, as in *adjourn;* but you render it one of the harshest in our language by your violation of *analogy* in perverting it. *Adverse* is accented on the first syllable, *reverse* and *perverse* on the second: pray, why? Milton writes, —

> "That heard th' *Advèrsary*, who roving stil," &c.

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* A clever poet of our day writes, —

> "Of the plebeian àspirant,"

and, —

> "We dèsignate the practical."

Shakspeare writes *aspèct*, *uprìght*, *upròar*.* The magnificent word *upròar* is used by Milton: how different from the *ùproar* of the streets! He uses *aspèct* as Shakspeare did, and *uprìght*. He also has the fine adjective *deform*. Who does not see that *uprìght* is better than *ùpright?* Then let him read the noble lines of Milton upon Man: —

> "Who, indued
> With sanctity of reason, might erect
> His stature, and uprìght with front serene
> Govern the rest, self-knowing, and from thence
> Magnanimous to correspond with Heaven."

Johnson. I agree with you, sir. *Aristocrat*, *concordance*, *contrary*, *industry*, *inimical*, *contemplate*, *conculcate*, *detail*, *Alexander*, *sonorous*, *sublunary* (what becomes of Milton's "*interlunar* cave?") *desultory*, *peremptory*, and many more, are now pronounced by the generality (who always adopt some signal folly) differently from the custom of our fathers, and accentuated on the first syllable.

Tooke. But even the Greeks, at a time when eloquence was highly flourishing, threw back the accent. In the words ὁμοιος and τϱοπαιον it rested on the second syllable with Æschylus and Thucydides; on the first with Plato and Aristoteles. The very same word was differently accentuated in its different senses: for instance μητϱὸκτονος, slain *by* a mother: μητϱοκτὸνος, the slayer of a mother. The common people still pronounce *contrary* with the accent where it should be. We throw it back on the first in *acceptable*, and not in *accessible;* yet it is on the second in *accept*, and on the first in *access*. We continue to say *recèss*, but we begin to say *àccess:* the first innovation was in *pròcess*. Dryden writes, —

> "Swift of despatch and easy of access."

Shakspeare very properly lays the accent on the second syllable of *importune*, —

> "Have you impòrtuned him?"

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* Our living poets have contributed much to throw back the accent: Wordsworth in particular. Even Southey, solid and many-sided as a basaltic column, lends his support here. He writes *èxploits* three several times and *pròmulgate* and *còntemplate*.

In conversation we often, indeed mostly, use *'em* for *them:* why not in writing? I would always do it after *th;* as *with 'em.* In the Scotch dialect, *wi'* for *with* has peculiar grace.*

Nothing is absurder than that, writing the aspirate, we should use it in some words, omit it in others. In polished society I have remarked none aspirated very distinctly, excepting *happy* and *hard*, with the substantives, though *a* precedes many, not *an.* Is it that we sigh (for to aspirate is nothing else in the mode of utterance) as much at what we wish in the former as at what we feel in the latter?

Johnson. I do not know: if your observation is just, it must be so; though the remark seems out of your line and beyond your feeling. The common people are fond of aspirates, and only omit them when they ought not.

Tooke. It is curious that *fortune* and *happiness* are in no language allied, nearly or remotely, to virtue or merit. In ours they are both of them named from chance.

> "What if within the moon's fair shining sphere,
> What if in every other star unseen,
> Of other worlds he *happily* should hear,"

for *haply.*

The Greeks were more pious, one would imagine, than our ancestors. They entertained the same opinion about fortune, but believed that happiness was the gift of good genii, or gods, — *eudaimonia.*

Johnson. Pray tell me now, sir, what we should do? Will you put me upon your knee and teach me? Should we pronounce all our aspirated syllables as such, or none?

Tooke. Certainly we should no more add a mark of aspiration to a word wherein it is not used, than a mark of interrogation.

Johnson. You are a strange man, sir; why, this is true, too! Can you be still a Whig?

Tooke. No, Doctor, nor ever was. I wore one livery, and threw it off as an encumbrance; I will not wear another which is both an encumbrance and a disgrace. I have never been even a swindler; now I must not only be a swindler, but a gambler too, if I sit down among the knaves who have so cheated us.

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* In the ode of Burns, how incomparably better are the words, *Scots wha hae wi'*, than, *who have with!*

Johnson. Swindler, as we understand it, is the worse character of the two.

Tooke. By no means so in fact. Any gambler may gamble every day and night in the seven, and most of them do, while few swindlers can swindle above the half. And their stakes are lighter, and such as can affect only their personalities: an hour's attendance on the public when they have nothing else to do, and from a station no less secure than commanding, and then immediately a quiet and long recess from the management of affairs. Gambling is the origin of more extensive misery than all other crimes put together: and the mischief falls principally on the unoffending and helpless. It leads by insensible degrees a greater number of wretches to the gallows, than the higher atrocities from which that terminus is seen more plainly. And yet statesmen make it the means of revenue, and kings bestow on it the title of *royal* under the name of lottery. The royal lottery-keeper is both a gambler and a swindler; for in his playing he knows that the stake he lays down is unequal to his opponent's. I keep aloof, not only from these pick-pockets, but also aside from the confederate gang who fain would hustle me against them. Moreover, I belong to no party.

Johnson. That sounds well: and yet he surely is a bad man, sir, who forms no affinities; a solitary sceptic; the blind man in *blind man's buff*, unable to stand a moment on either side, or to fix upon any one about him.

Tooke. All this is true, Doctor. I am a bad man, but exactly in the contrary of the word's original meaning, which I thank you for reminding me of. A *bad* man is a *bade* man, or *bidden* man; a slave in other words: and the same idea was attached to the expression by the Italians and the French (while their language and they had a character) in *cattivo* and *chétif*, and by us in *caitiff*, men in no other condition than that wherein they must do as they are *bid*. We should ourselves have been in no higher condition, if we had not resisted what, in palaces and churches and colleges, was called legitimate power; and indeed we should still be, rather than men, a pliant unsubstantial herbage, springing up from under the smoky, verminous, unconcocted doctrine of passive obedience, to be carted off by our kings amid their carols, and cocked and ricked and cut, and half-devoured, half-trampled, and wasted, in the pinfold of our priesthood.

If we take away a letter from the words I have stated, we add one with as little discernment to *therefor* and *wherefor;* we should as reasonably write *thereofe*, *whereofe*, *thereine*, *whereine:* strictly, it would be better to take away one *e* more, and write *therfor*, as was done formerly. I know the origin of the error: the origin may *explain*, but not *excuse*. It is this: the ancients wrote *therforre.* The useless *r* was removed from an infinity of words; and those who removed it in this instance were little aware that they had better left it, unless they also took away the *e.* We write *solely* not *soly;* yet we do not write *idlely* but *idly:* we should about as properly write *barly* for *barely.*

Johnson. I doubt whether you would gain any thing by taking this *barly* to market.

Tooke. I should be cried out against as loudly as you were (on another occasion) for your *oats.* If we write *incur* and *recur*, why not *succur;* if *monster*, why not *theater;* if *barometer*, why not *meter?*

Johnson. After all, Mr. Tooke, I must pronounce it as my opinion, that we should do very well in continuing to write as we write at present.

Tooke. With due submission, I will not pronounce but suggest that nothing is done very well which can be done better. In several words we follow the French without any reason; and we do not follow them where they have seen and abandoned their error. For instance, we follow them in *theatre*, which they spell according to the genius of their language and the exigence of their verse, but contrary to ours; to be consistent we should spell *letter*, *lettre.* I do not see why *little*, *able*, *probable*, &c., should not be written *littil*, *abil*, *probabil:* as *civil* forms *civility*, so *abil* forms *ability*, *probabil* forms *probability;* the others, as we corruptly use them, form *ablety* and *probablety.* There is also another reason: in verse there is a hiatus when they come before a vowel, which hiatus could not exist if we followed what analogy prescribes. I strongly object to *subtle* and *subtlety*, and would propose *subtil* and *subtility*, as *fertil* and *fertility.* From *epistle* and *apostle*, "epist*o*lary" and "apost*o*lical" cannot be formed;

they may be, and are, from "epist*o*l" and "apost*o*l." It is lucky that "ang*e*ls" are not as ill-treated as "apostl*e*s." If I am to have an *apostle*, I may as well have a *symble.* I would retain, in spelling and in every thing else, whatever old manners and old customs are commodious: I would discountenance all the newer which violate propriety or shake consistency. Why should *proceed* and *succeed* be spelled in one way, *precede* and *accede* in another? Why should not the two former be written in the second syllable like the two latter?

Johnson. I know not: I think it would be better.

Tooke. I do not go so far in these matters as your friend Elphinstone; and although I would be a reformer, my reform should be temperate and topical. Many have written *exil* for *banishment:* I would constantly do so, and *exile* for *banished man.*

Johnson. The distinction has not been observed by any one, and would be commodious.

Tooke. You might imagine from the spelling that *complain* and *explain* were of the same origin. To avoid this error, I would follow the authors who have written the latter word *explane;* and the rather, as the substantive is *explanation*, not *explaination*, nor *explaint.* *Passenger* and *messenger* are coarse and barbarous for *passager* and *messager*, and nothing the better for having been adopted into polite society. It may soon admit *sausinges.* Middleton, we have seen, writes *declame*, and elegantly: Milton writes *sovran* and *foren* equally so; for neither the pronunciation nor the etymology authorizes the vitiated mode in common use. These writers may be considered as modern; both must be considered as learned, one as eloquent; and, until men who are more so write differently, Milton at least shall be my guide. A beautiful adjective in *Paradise Lost* hath ceased to be used in prose, or even in poetry, — *alterne.*

> "The greater to have rule by day,
> The less by night, *alterne.*"

Alternate would serve more properly for the verb.

There is hardly a writer of the Elizabethan age who will not induce us to hesitate on our spelling, or rather who will not suggest some improvement. *Abbot*, from *abbas*, should be spelled *abbat*, as Tanner spells it. Massinger writes *carroch*, from *carozza:* our *carriage* is inelegant. Jonson, in his verses to Wroth, says, —

"In autumn at the *partrich* mak'st a flight."

I would write the word so, if it were for no other reason than that we write *ostrich* in the same manner.

Johnson. I remember two of his verses for a word to be corrected in them: —

"When thy latest sand is spent,
Thou mayest think life a thing but lent."

It would then be too late: *when* should be *ere*.

Tooke. True.

Johnson. As *fire* and *sire* and *hour* and *four* sometimes are dissyllables in the old poets, so likewise are *year* and *sure;* while *entire* and *desire* are trisyllables; *contrary*, a quadrisyllable. They spelled indifferently and wrote arbitrarily. Shakspeare takes no liberties of this kind unauthorized in fact or analogy by other writers more scholastic.

Tooke. They favor my proposition of spelling by *il* what we spell by *le:* such as *humbil*, *dazzil*, *tickil;* for in whatever way they wrote the word, they often make a trisyllable of *humbled* and *dazzled*.

"And that hath dazzled my reason's light,"

says Shakspeare; and in *Henry VI.* he makes a trisyllable of "*English*."

Johnson. I know not what advantages we can obtain from a perception of crudities and barbarisms, unless it be that it enables us to estimate more correctly the great improvements we have made in later times. But I admit that we might have retained a few things to our advantage. Who would read Chaucer and Spenser for their language?

Tooke. Spenser I would not, delightful as are many parts of his poetry; but Chaucer I would read again and again both for his poetry and his language.

Johnson. I suppose, sir, you prefer the dialect of Thomson, a Whig, to Spenser's?

Tooke. No, Doctor, his is worse still; but there are images and feelings in his *Winter*, in comparison with which the liveliest in Spenser are faint.

Johnson. And those too, no doubt, on the same subject in the *Georgics!*

Tooke. Beyond a question. It appears to me that there is more poetry in it than in the whole of that elaborate poem, beautiful as it is in versification and in language; both of which are wanting in almost every place to Thomson.

Johnson. Oh! you do acknowledge then that the versification is elaborate, and the language beautiful!

Tooke. Doctor, I hate carping. Where much is good in a man or a poem I would always mention it; and where in the same man or poem there is a little bad, I would pass it over.

Johnson. What is the bad, sir, in the *Georgics?* Come, I have you now off the ground: your strength, such as it is, has left you.

Tooke. May all men's strength leave them when they would make invidious objections!

Johnson. Rare subterfuge! Virgil is a dead prince, sir; you cannot hurt him.

Tooke. Far be the wish from me! I would act toward him as the pious ancients did toward the dead: I would wash him first, and afterward perfume him with the most precious unguents.

Johnson. Up with your sleeves then, and begin the washing! Here, take the *Georgics;* I usually carry them about me.

Tooke. Has Ovid, has Lucan, has any other Latin poet, written such balderdash and bombast as the nineteen verses in the beginning, at the close of an invocation already much too prolix? Why all these additions to the modest prayer of Varro, which he has versified? Here let me suggest a new and a necessary reading just above these lines: —

> "Quique novas alitis non *ullo* semine fruges."

It must be *uno*, to avoid nonsense, — which is always a benefit, even in poetry, — and so represent *wheat*, *barley*, *oats*, &c.; that is to say, "not only one kind of grain." The lines of the letter *n* and the double *l* may have been much alike in manuscript, and may have easily misled transcribers. I will not dwell upon the verses after

> "Tethys emat omnibus undis;"

but really those eight appear to me like an excrescence on the face of a beautiful boy.

Johnson. They are puerile, are they? — a blemish, a deformity!

Tooke. In honest truth I think so.

Johnson. You have turned over only one leaf: the faults must lie thick.

Tooke. Somewhat. Beginning again at the eighty-first line, I find the *earth* ending that and all the five following, with one exception, *agros*, *arva*, *terræ*, *agros*, flammis, *terræ*.

Johnson. I do not credit you.

Tooke. Take the book.

Johnson. No, sir, I will not take the book: read on.

Tooke. In the next page, *arvis*, *arva*, *arva*, close the verse within twelve successive lines. In the next beyond, *moveri*, *removit*, *repressit*, one after the other; and immediately after, "extund*eret* artes," "quær*eret* herbam," and "excud*eret* ignem." Three more pages, and the words *convivia curant* are followed in the next verse by "*curas*que resolvit." May I express my delight at —

Johnson. No, sir! no, sir! no delight about any thing! Spit your spite.

Tooke. Since you are so urgent in your commands, I will proceed. Beginning from the 406th verse, there are thirteen which end with spondaic words. In the second book,

> "Et gens illa quidem sumptis non tarda pharetris"

is another excrescence; and in the following we find *tardumque* saporem.

Johnson. Sir, can you construe that line? I doubt it.

Tooke. Instruct me then.

Johnson. You, being a word-catcher, ought to know that our word *tart*, for *sharp*, corresponds with *tardus*.

Tooke. I perceive the commentator gives this interpretation; a very wrong one. *Tart* is not related to *tardus*. Virgil means that the citron ripens late. Before we reach the 300th line, here are together twelve more ending with spondaic words. Now, my dear sir, do let me give utterance to my enthusiasm on "O fortunatos nimium!" Permit my raptures at sitting down among the "*saltus et lustra ferarum*," — the feeling is so new. Did I hear one of them? methought I heard a growl, or something similar.

Johnson. Go on, sir, and mind your business.

Tooke. Well then; *rura* ends one line, *jura* the next. "Atque alio *patriam*" — then, with one line between — "*hinc patriam*." "Pascitur in *magna* sylvâ," and just below, "*magnus* Olympus." Doctor, how do you construe "*Odor attulit auras*"?

Johnson. That is an hypallage, sir.

Tooke. But construe it.

Johnson. One must reverse the sense.

Tooke. A pretty idea of poetry. His *odor attulit auras* is like Shakspeare's "*The oats have eaten the horses;*" but Shakspeare's was fun, and Virgil's was affectation. In fact the hypallage, of which Virgil is fonder than any other writer, is much the gravest fault in language.

Johnson. What, sir! graver than solecism?

Tooke. Yes, Doctor; in the same degree as nonsense is worse than inelegance. A boy shouts at another boy and holds him in derision when he finds him putting, as he calls it, the cart before the horse. Onward, if you please: and here we find again, at *currentem ilignis*, fourteen final spondees without one bacchic foot among them. At last we arrive at that passage which provoked you to throw poor Thomson under the triumphal car of Virgil: —

> "Concrescunt subitæ currenti in flumine crustæ,
> Undaque jam *tergo* ferratos sustinet orbes,
> Puppibus illa prius patulis, nunc hospita plaustris."

These and the four following would make but an indifferent figure in the exercise of an Eton boy; there is no harmony, no fluency in them: they are broken pieces of ice. What think you, after "*Æraque dissiliunt vulgò*," of "*vestesque rigescunt*"? Such an instance of the art of sinking you will not find in the Latin, nor easily in any other poetry. What follows is much better; but it will bear no comparison with the

Miltonian description, in Thomson, of the frozen regions visited by the caravan from Cathay.

Johnson. Sir, even the description of Orpheus and Eurydice could not stir your cold blood!

Tooke. Doctor, you have formed your judgment upon it; let me reflect and hesitate a little before I deliver mine.

Johnson. Now I would lay a wager that all this magnificence is not worth your Scotch-Cathay caravan!

Tooke. I would do the same.

Johnson. Then, sir, you have either no sense of shame or no soul for poetry.

Tooke. On *shame* and *soul* the discussion might be unsatisfactory. But let us, my dear sir, survey together the character of Proteus. Nothing can be harder, unless it be myself: he must be chained to make him civil or tractable, to make him render the slightest and easiest service to any one. He had no affinity or friendship, no community of character or country, with Orpheus and Eurydice. One would think he could have known little about them, and cared less. In a monster, for such he was, and so unfeeling and solitary, the description is far from natural; and even in Virgil himself, who seems to have forgotten that he was not speaking in his own person, it would have been somewhat overcharged. The Homeric simile of the nightingale, and the silly tale of a head speaking when it was cut off and rolling down a river, and speaking so loud, too, as to make an echo on the banks, is puerile, absurd, and preposterous.

Johnson. The verses on the nightingale are inharmonious, no doubt?

Tooke. I did not say it; but some parts are. Beside, "*mærens*, *queritur*, *flet*, *miserabile*, *mæstis*:" surely we do not want all at once, nor to express one feeling. *Observans nido implumes detraxit* is as inharmonious as any verse can easily be made. On the whole, how much better would the episode have been if Proteus had said little, and if Cyrene had given the description!

Johnson. You know nothing of poetry; but that last remark is true. Who suggested it?

Tooke. Doctor Johnson; when he favored me with the volume which I now return to him.

Johnson. Sir, you carry your revolutionary and chaotic principles into the fields and groves, into the woods and mountains, and render more fierce and gloomy the winds and tempests and eternal snows. You have no love of order even in works of art.

Tooke. Doctor, we were talking just now of dissyllables and trisyllables and Chaucer. He writes, —

"With Theseus the squire principal."

Johnson. If you quote such metre, you may quote that also which was

"Written by William Prynne esquire, the
Year of our Lord six hundred thirty-three."

Tooke. Never did the Muses sail to their antipodes so expeditiously as under the steerage of their new Tiphys, if you on this occasion will let me call you so.

Johnson. Call me any thing, sir, rather than call Thomson a writer of English.

Tooke. Affectation is his greatest fault; and it is a matter of wonder to me that he seldom errs on any other side. I do not remember that he confuses, as the Scotch and Irish do perpetually, *shall* and *will.* We ourselves confound them without knowing it; but idiomatically.

Johnson. In what manner? Good writers never do.

Tooke. For instance, *You will be burned if you touch the tea-urn. Shall I be burned if I touch the tea-urn?* Here the action and time are the same, yet the words differ. In fact, "*will I*" can only be used in the rebutment of a question; as when a person asks, *Will you or will you not?* and the reply, instead of affirmation or negative, is angrily, *Will I or will I not?* in which is understood, *Do you ask* me thus? To another we say, "*Shall I?*" and he replies, "*If you will.*"

These things, Doctor, would appear trifling to trifling men; but not to you, who cannot be less curious in the philosophy of a language than in its etymology.

Johnson. Let us stop where we are, and while we are innocent. Philosophy in these matters draws us away to analysis: the dry *seta equina* of analysis breaks into pieces, in one or two of which pieces we soon descry the restless heads and wriggling tails of metaphysics. Sir, metaphysics lead to materialism, and materialism to atheism. Those who do not see this see nothing: but there are more who see it than will confess it. Of what value is any thing, although it should conduce at first to some truth even less dry and sterile, if in its progression it renders men insincere, and in its termination unhappy? Anatomize words, flay, dissect, eviscerate language, but keep your faith out of the crucible, for the daily use and sustenance of your family.

Tooke. I began to fear, Doctor, that you would have concluded your sentence in another manner.

Johnson. In what manner, sir?

Tooke. That you would have said, *to go to market with*, for the daily use and sustenance of my family. My faith, I do assure you, I keep both out of the crucible and out of the *aqua regia*, — another great melter and transmuter. My dear sir, I would divert the gathering storm of your anger by any propitiation and concession.

Johnson. Rogue!

Tooke. Excellently and most opportunely introduced. I could say something upon that word too; but I doubt whether it would be quite so agreeable to you as another of which I was thinking. In your reading of our ancient poets, particularly our dramatists, you must have observed that *kind* is frequently used for *nature.* This is a beautiful feature in our language. Our ancestors identified *nature* with *kindness.* I love our old modes of thinking in most things, and of speaking in many. We have several ancient words used at present in a different sense from what they were formerly; *rogue* for instance.

Johnson. No sedition, sir! no vague allusions! no contempt of authority! I know who rogues are, as well as you do; but I abstain from throwing a firebrand into their houses, and lighting the populace to pillage and murder.

Tooke. Well judged! — the populace has no right to any such things.

Johnson. Strange! marvellous! You enunciate even these sentences, — the most detestable, the most impious, the most seditious, — uninflamed, unwarmed; like your chemists, who pour from one bottle into another, just as unconcernedly, I know not what pestiferous and heavy air of theirs, if report speaks truly, corking it down until they can find something to set the whole of it in a blaze; and thus teaching us that what is the lowest in its nature is the most destructive in its application.

Tooke. Doctor, in the asbestine quality of my mind, with the flames and fagots on both sides, you appear to see a miracle: if you could see more clearly, you would discover in it Christianity without one.

Johnson (*aside*). I did not imagine that this logical wrong-head could balance and swing and dandle me so easily.

I recollect no expression in Chaucer worth retaining and not retained.

Tooke. What think you of *swough*, the long-continued sound of wind?—

"a *swough*
As thof a storme should brasten every bough."
PALAMON AND ARCITE.

Johnson. It sounds grandly: there is something of a melancholy and a lonely wildness in it.

Tooke. The Scotch retain it still, spelling it *sugh*.

Johnson. Let them keep it, sir, to themselves. I would not give a straw for it. We want neither harsh words nor obsolete ones.

Tooke. Suppose we found in Chaucer some words less harsh in their pronunciation than they appear at present; and others, if not less so, yet useful for variety or for rhyme: such are *beforne*, before, *withouten*, without, *somdel*, somewhat, *astonned*, astonished, *brast* and *brasten*, burst or broken, and many more.

Johnson. Let our language rest where it is.

Tooke. Languages, like men, when they have rested long and totally, grow heavy and plethoric: we must renew their juices, and bring them back into their native air.

We have *presently*, but want *futurely*, used by Fletcher in the *Two noble Kinsmen.* Fashionable people turn nosegays out of doors, and send to France for *bouquets.* Why have we forgotten our more beautiful *posy*, of which Spenser and Swift were not disdainful? Among the rich furniture of our ancestors, which we cast aside, may be reckoned a certain two-handed instrument of great utility and strength. *By* and *of* were employed by them at their option. Shakspeare says,—

"Unwhipt of Justice."

We now abandon altogether the better usage: I would have reserved both. We use the word *bat* for various things; among the rest, for that animal which partakes the nature of bird and mouse: why not call it, at least in poetry, what Ben Jonson does, *flittermouse?* The word in all respects is better; it is more distinguishing, more descriptive, and our language is by one the richer for it.

Johnson. The reasons are valid and unobjectionable.

Tooke. The verb to *beat* is the same in its present tense and in its preterite; so irregularly and improperly, that you cannot but have observed how people avoid the use of it in the latter.

Johnson. The Romans did the same in their *ferio.* Instead of taking a preterite from it, they used *percussi.* I think however that I have somewhere seen the preterite, *bate.*

Tooke. We had our choice either to follow the inflection of *cheat* or *eat;* we took the latter, and then would have neither. I am afraid of reminding you where you probably last met with *bate*, which you seem looking after.

Johnson. Subdue your blushes, my gentle sir, and conduct me back to the place, be it where it may.

Tooke. The Irishman in Fielding's *Tom Jones* says, "He *bate* me."

Johnson. What we hear from an Irishman we are not overfond of repeating, whether in grammar or fact: but in this case our risibility is excited by the circumstances rather than the language, although the language too has its share in it. The dialect is Hibernian.

Tooke. We certainly should not either smile at the expression in a vulgar countryman of our own, nor condemn it in a learned discourse from the pulpit.

Johnson. I would not hesitate to employ it in graver composition.

Tooke. Nor I: for authors much richer both in thought and language than any now living, or any recently deceased, have done so.

Johnson. If we begin to reinstate old words, we shall finish by admitting new ones.

Tooke. There would be the less danger of that, as there would be the less need. Yet even new words may be introduced with good effect, and particularly when the subject is ludicrous.

Johnson. Phrynicus and Julius Pollux animadvert with severity on Menander for inventing new words, and for using such others as were unknown in Attica: and perhaps this is the reason why he was frequently vanquished by Polemon in the contest for the prize of comedy. Gellius tells us, on the authority, I think, of Apollodorus, that, although he wrote a hundred and five pieces, he was the victor but in eight.

Tooke. And if we could recover them all, we should find probably those eight the very worst among them, and the only ones that fairly could admit a competition. When Menander asked Polemon whether he did not blush at being his vanquisher, the answer (I can well imagine) was another such suffusion; and not, as would have been the case if there were any room for it, that the inelegance or inexactness of Menander turned the countenance of the judges from him. He was considered by the best critics of succeeding ages as the most Attic of the Athenians; and certainly was not the less so for employing those expressions, novel or foreign, which suited the characters he introduced. A word may be excellent in a dialogue, which would deteriorate and deform an oration. Julius Pollux, I remember, disapproves of many words used by Plato and Herodotus. Now although Plato is often flat and insipid, as Dionysius of Halicarnassus demonstrates by examples, yet I cannot think he ever used a term improperly or unfitly. In regard to Herodotus, his style I consider as the most proper, the most pure, the most simply and inelaborately harmonious of any author in any language. His genius, what rarely happens, is well seconded and sustained by his spirit of research and his delight in knowledge. He has been censured for a deficiency of elevation. Many can judge of elevation in phraseology; fewer of that which is attained by an elastic vigor in the mind, keeping up easily a broad continuance of imaginative thought. This is almost as necessary to matter of fact as to poetry, if the matter of fact is worthy to be impressed on the memory or understanding.

How much better is *disherited* than *disinherited; innerest* than *innermost*. How much more properly is *tongue* written *tong*, *fruit frute*, *suit sute*, *friend frend*, *atchieve*, *acheve*. We derive *conceive*, *receive*, *perceive*, through the French, who never thrust into them the letter *i:* why then should we? These are not new modes: we find them in the time of Spenser, and most of them in his works. He writes the verbs *wil* and *shal;* he also writes *til* and *ontil.* He would not do so unless others whom he esteemed as good authors had given him the example; for his rhyme, which he favors at any rate, did not exact it. Anciently *work* was spelled *werke,* as we continue to pronounce it. The final vowel in this word and many others was retained long after its use had ceased.

Johnson. Of what use was it?

Tooke. It often served to form a dissyllable in the plural, and in the genitive singular, as we find in Chaucer; and it was not only in poetry that it was thus pronounced.

Johnson. Raleigh uses the grand word *sumptuosity*, ill exchanged for *costliness* or *expensiveness*.

Tooke. I have lately heard *ìllustrate* for illùstrate: we shall presently come to impèrceptible. We have *aspect*, *prospect*, *respect*, *retrospect;* we formerly had also the substantive *suspect.* Raleigh uses it: "But this was not his manner of reasoning with Hastings, whose fidelity to his master's sons was without *suspect.*" We have moreover his authority, and Hooker's, for *possest*, *exprest*, *supprest*, *confest*, *mockt.* He writes *samplar*, and *begger:* we, very improperly, *sampler* and *beggar.* Milton, the great master of our language and its harmonies, accents on the second syllable, *consùlt* (the substantive), *accèss*, *procèss*, *advèrse*, *aspèct*, *convèrse*, *insùlts* (substantive), *contèst* (substantive), *impùlse*, *pretèxt*, *blasphèmous*, *crystàlline*, *remèdiless*, *surfàce*, *triùmphed*, *contrìte*, *marìtime*, *prodùct*, *prescrìpt*, *conflàgrant.* You perceive by those accentuations how obtuse are the ears of our fashionable poets in comparison with Milton's. *Prune* and *preen* are the same word, meaning to *trim:* but it would be well to apply *prune* exclusively to the trimming of trees, and *preen* exclusively to the trimming of the feathers by birds. Dryden and Pope use *prune* in the latter sense, misled by what they found printed in Shakspeare, who, rich in the phraseology of the country, wrote (I am confident) *preen.* South writes *an* before *high.* Addison writes *superiour;* Milton, Taylor, Locke, and Swift, *superior.* In many instances the spelling of Chaucer is more easy, more graceful and elegant, than the modern: for example, where he avoids the diphthongs *ea*, *oa*, and the reduplication of the vowel in the following: —

> "In *cote* and hode of *grene*
> A *shefe* of peacocke armes brighte and *kene*."

This was continued for many centuries, and we find it in Ben Jonson: who also writes *cossen* (cousin), *linage*, *coles*, *pen'd*, *dore*, *ake*, *balkt*, *bewitcht*, *finde*, *purchast*, *hoopt*, *confest*, *cloke*, *nere*, *borne*, *onlly*, *kist*, *beleeve*, *sute*, *cloke*, *armor*, *jayle*, *stript*, *clensd*, *reproch*, *dote*, *stretcht*, *stampt*, *lothe*, *polisht*, *iland*, *accomplisht*, *starcht*, *tand*, *neere*, *furnisht*, *crackt*, *brest*, *smel*, *led*, *wel*, *stabd*, *mockt*, *pluckt*, *incenst*, *scepter*, *theater*, *theeves*, *fetcht*, *supprest*, *flote*, *distinguisht*, *doo* (do), *honor* (both verb and substantive), *profest*, *deprest*, *prest*. We have altered every one of those spellings: can any man tell me which in the whole number is altered for the better?

Johnson. How would you deal with the preterite of such a verb as *notice?*

Tooke. It must be *noticed:* and I wish we were obliged to pronounce distinctly each of its three syllables. Countrymen in the midland shires have preserved the verb *notize;* like *prize* and *advertize.* I wish we never had rejected it, and had kept *notice* for the substantive only.

Johnson. I have remarked the preterite spelled *notic'd*, and by writers of reputation, in the beginning of this century.

Tooke. Wonderful, but perfectly true. I would rather see Grammar a shrew than a slattern. There are hours and occasions when she needs not be full-dressed; there are none when it is pardonable in her to come down with tangled hair. There are fictions in our laws, and there are fictions also in our language: *notic'd*, *entic'd*, are examples. We have seen them printed; we never have heard or can hear them pronounced. Bottles in print are *corked*, in the cellars they are *corkt:* no human voice ever uttered *cork'd.* Since we have two ways, why take that which leads us wrong? We have both *blest* and *blessed;* but we have not both *prest* and *pressed*, *carest* and *caressed.* Like the Achilles of Horace, who "jura negat sibi nata," &c., we seize upon what does not belong to us, and cast aside what does: we speak one thing and write another.

We never say *patriarchical*, yet we say *monarchical* and *anarchical:* harsh words! Since the choice is left me by prescription in the one, by analogy in the other, I would constantly write *anarchal* and *monarchal.* It occurs to me now, what I should have mentioned before if I had thought of it at the time when we were speaking on the subject, that Fairfax, instead of writing *embraced*, wrote (as many did) *embrast.*

> "Gather the rose of love while yet thou *maist*,
> Loving be loved, embracing be *embrast.*"

Johnson. Indeed, the word "embra*s*e" comes more directly from its origin.

Tooke. Ménage tells us that he did the contrary of what was done by the Academy. "They fill their dictionary," says he, "with words in use: I take greater care, in my etymologies, of those which are no longer so, that they may not be quite forgotten."

Johnson. Both did right. It is interesting to trace the features of a language in every stage of its existence. I wish you would do it, Mr. Tooke, — I have done enough: it must be the exercise of learned leisure, and not of him whose daily bread is dipped in ink.

Tooke. Doctor, there was a time when I sighed at what raised my admiration. I thought it was over: your last words renew it. I am not the adviser of pensions, — I should be happy to see the greater part of them struck off: but more gladly still should I read an act of Parliament, in pursuance of which ten were established in perpetuity for our ten best writers. Five of them should enjoy five hundred a year, the others three, closing only when preferment of higher value were given them.

Johnson. And pray, sir, would you admit the partisan of rebellion to the advantages of this endowment?

Tooke. I would exclude none whatever for his opinions, political or theological. The minister who had granted such an indulgence to his opponent would indemnify himself by the acquisition of worthier supporters, attached to him by his magnanimity: the partisan of rebellion who accepted it would render but little service to his cause. The whole sum thus expended is barely what you throw upon the desk of the lowest scribbler, appointed Secretary (we will suppose) to the Board of Admiralty for some smutty song or pious pasquinade; barely what a vulgar commissary gains in one day's contract for bullocks; and therefore on neither side of the house would the motion find, consistently, any opponent who can spell and cast accounts. Since the form of our Constitution is not such as admits every man of superior abilities to the place he might occupy in one more popular, so slight amends may surely be made for the privation. I venture to assert that it would render our government more respected abroad than it is rendered by our armies and navies, and more beloved at home than it is by our assessments and excise.

Johnson. Ay, ay! among the ten we should find your name, no doubt!

Tooke. No, sir; my name is not to be where ten are at a time: beside, there is no minister whose exclusion of me would be unjustifiable. These two considerations make me speak openly and warmly. Few authors could recommend the motion: I dare to do it, excited by the neglected genius of my adversary here, and the glory no less neglected of my country.

Johnson. I would hardly be so ministerial on this point as you are: I would increase the value of the pension by making it depend on the vote of Parliament.

Tooke. This is better: we may suppose three names recommended by a committee on every vacancy.

Johnson. I perceive that you, in the midst of letters, always turn aside to the political.

Tooke. I wish, in the midst of the political, our representatives were turned for a moment to the consideration of letters. What I recommend is practicable and uncostly. Hardly one member of the Honorable House is interested in recommending a relative or friend: and I doubt whether, in all the ten to be chosen, more than two or three would be nominated on an unpaid bill, by coach-maker or fish-monger or tailor.

Johnson. Ah, false suitor! you have unwoven with your own hands Penelope's bright web. You might have left it to Penelope herself: night would have closed again on it in scattered filaments.

Tooke. No, my dear sir, I have not hurt the web; I have only puffed away a design of it which was never designed to be executed. Cadmus, who found letters, found also the dragon's teeth to be sown among them and to consume them. Now we are in Asia, let us turn it to our purposes, as others do.

The word *Tartar*, we are informed of late, is properly *Tatar* in its own language. Be it so: this is no sufficient reason why we also should be *Tatars* or speak *tatar*. The word *Tartar* has been received among us some centuries, and invariably used. *Caractacus*, *Cassibellaunus*, and *Britannia* are not exactly the British words: yet a Roman would have been ridiculed who, a hundred years after the reception of them, should rather have inserted the original British in his history. We are become well acquainted with *Mahomet:* but every man who has travelled in the East brings home a new name for the prophet, and trims his turban to his own taste.

Johnson. I am reminded of an observation I made the other day, that some recent authors write *Tartarian* as the adjective of *Tartar; Tartarian* is that of *Tartarus; Tartar* is itself an adjective.

Tooke. I will pay you down on the nail a substantive for your adjective. We say *poulterer:* we might as well say *ministerer*, *masterer*, and *maltsterer*. Our language, sir, is losing a little of its propriety every year. It becomes more trim by its espaliers; but I wish I could say its fruit is the better for the reduction of its branches. We have *anger* and *wrath* in our old language; *resentment*, *rage*, *pique*, the worse and weaker parts of the feeling, come from the French.

Johnson. You place too little reliance upon good authorities.

Tooke. Good writers are authorities for only what is good, and by no means and in no degree for what is bad; which may be found even in them.

Johnson. How then decide upon what is really bad or good?

Tooke. By exercising our ratiocination upon it, and by comparing with it other modes of expression. Many of those who are generally called good writers are afraid of writing as they speak. This is a worse than panic fear; and is the principal reason why our moderns are less rich and less easy than their predecessors. They are reluctant to mount up above the time of Dryden: not indeed a mean writer in prose or poetry, singularly terse in his moral sentences and felicitous in his allusions; but in copiousness and beauty of language no more comparable to Barrow and Taylor, and some others, than the canal in St. James's park is comparable to the Thames. If we wish to breathe freely and largely, and to fill our innermost breasts with the spirit of our language, we must ascend higher.

Johnson. The most curious thing I know in it is, that *ever* and *never* should be synonymous. Can you account for this?

Tooke. The *mai* of the Italians, in like manner, serves both purposes. *Were you never so just* is the same in its meaning as *Were you ever so just.* The one is, *were you never in your life so just as upon this occasion;* the other, *howsoever just you were.*

Johnson. This satisfies me. I should myself have given the same solution.

Tooke. It must then, Doctor, be a clear and easy one.

Johnson (*aside*). The man's words are ambiguous, although it is plain that he is not aware of it; for nothing was ever so serene as his countenance, so unembarrassed as his manner, so polite as his whole demeanor. Can this fellow now be in his heart almost a republican? Impossible!

Tooke. We have another odd expression in the verb *help*, when we say, "*I cannot help thinking*," for, "I cannot *but* think." We *help* in assisting and resisting. It is an exercise of power. Here the power is on the side of resistance. Again to the spelling-book: *Rind*, *bind*, *mind*, *find*, *wind* (the verb), *kind*, *blind*, &c., we already have acknowledged, are better written as they were formerly, with a final *e*, — as also *child*, *wild*, *mild*, — that the sound may accord with the spelling, which should always be the case where no very powerful reason interposes its higher authority. *Ache*, why not *ake?* — *height*, why not *highth*, as Milton writes it? Those who polish language, like those who clean pictures, often rub away the coloring. Roughness, you will tell me, is removed by the process of the moderns: I could adduce no few instances to the contrary. Now, do you imagine that the fashionable way of writing *empress's son*, if we *could* pronounce it accordingly, would be better than *empresses?* No other language in the world (for though the serpent could once speak he could never write) presents four *esses* in conjunction. The final *es* is more proper, more ancient, more English, than the substitute *his*, which Addison, Dryden (in "Etheridge *his* courtship"), and a crowd of inferiors, have employed. Raleigh himself, greatly more learned and eloquent than either, writes "He was advised of Asdrubal *his* approach."

Johnson. Reverting to the "*empress's son*," who would not rather say "*son of the empress*"?

Tooke. I talk of what exists in the language, not of what is best in it; nor indeed would your alteration be preferable in all contingencies. What, for instance, think you of this? "We have heard of the ill state of health of the son of the empress of Russia." The double genitive ought to be avoided as much as possible in all composition: it has, however, a worse effect in modern languages than in ancient. To ours the ancient termination designating it is highly advantageous. It has not only two genitives, but, let me also remark to you, it has a greater variety of sounds in it than in any other I know.

Johnson. Surely not than the Greek.

Tooke. Beyond a question; if you acknowledge that the Greeks, who have never lost their language, know how to pronounce it better than we do. Their diphthongs are almost insensibly so: we give to their *ai* and *oi* our own deep-mouthed tone, our own as exclusively as *i* in *mine*, &c.

Returning to the *s*: although we have one word of nine letters in which it occurs five times, and another of only eight in which it appears as often (*possesses* and *assesses*), yet I once from curiosity examined a hundred verses in Shakspeare and the same number in Sophocles, and found it more frequent in the latter. If I had counted the *xis*, the *zetas*, and the *psis*, which contain it, the difference would have been still greater. It is true, the Greek iambic contains more syllables than ours; but the number of letters is nearly the same in each.

Johnson. I am unsatisfied, after all, that the English *is*, whether joined to the word or disjoined from it, whether in full or in contraction, may not be *his*, as our grammarians have supposed.

Tooke. That it has not relation to *his* may be demonstrated by its being common to both male and female, to both singular and plural: we say not only *Edwin's book*, but *Emma's book;* and, with as little hesitation, *men's minds*. Beside, the most part of old authors do not write the possessive case in *is*, but in *es;* because *e* was the general termination of substantives.

There are some words which, if we receive them, we cannot spell rightly, they have been so perverted by custom: such are *amaze*, *alarm*, a *newt;* the first of which was a *maze*, the second a *larum*, the last an *evet*. So the French *affaire*, and the Italian *affare*, — *à faire*, *a fare;* demonstrable in the latter by the earlier word, still equally in common use, *facenda*, res *facienda*. *Bower* is part of *arbour*, and *cate* is part of *delicate*.

Johnson. Is *delicate*, then, used anywhere as a substantive for *delicacy?*

Tooke. Marston in one of his plays says *princely delicates*. *Débonnaire* was formerly used in a different sense from the present. "*Il faut être simple, obéissant, et débonnaire, pour être propre à recevoir religion*," says Charron, a writer scarcely less shrewd than Bacon, and much more elegant. But I have traced the old gentleman pretty often out of Seneca into Plutarch.

Johnson. I do not much read French: that language appears to have been greatly changed in one century.

Tooke. Even since Pascal, Ménage, and Mad. de Sévigné. Formerly to teach Greek was *montrer le Grec:* it would have been thought an Italianism to say *enseigner*. This is remarkable in the French, that it is more figurative in common conversation than in ordinary prose writing, and more so in prose than in verse. A *batterie de cuisine*, a *chapeau abîmé*, an artificial flower *magnifique*, a false curl *superbe*, a kidney bean ill-boiled *horrible*, an old fashioned coat *affreux;* a turbot with a wrong sauce an *assassination*.

We see written *mantua*-maker, for *manteau*-maker, — a vulgar and ludicrous error; we see also *ameliorate* for *meliorate*, although one would reasonably suppose that it signified the reverse. We write *posthumous*, in the silly opinion that the word is derived from *post* and *humus;* the termination in fact is nowise different from that of *maxumus* and *optumus* in the Latin, although, by one of the chances common in language, it has escaped that change in the middle syllable which the others have undergone.

You would derive a good many words from the Latin which come to us from nearer relatives in the North; and there are some few which really are Latin, and you do not notice as such. What think you for instance of *hocus*, *pocus?*

Johnson. Sir, those are exclamations of conjurers, as they call themselves.

Tooke. Well, Doctor, let us join them, and try to be conjurers ourselves a little. We know that the common people often use the aspirate unnecessarily, and as often omit the *i;* for instance, they constantly say *ingenous* for *ingenious: u* and *i* are not only confounded by us, as in *grum* for *grim*, &c., but were equally so by the Romans, as *lacruma* was *lacrima.*

Johnson. You mean rather with *y.*

Tooke. No; they oftener wrote it with *i:* the conceited and ignorant used *y*, only to make it appear they knew the derivation. For the same reason, among us people write *thyme* with the *h*, contrary to the manner of pronouncing it.

Johnson. Pray go on.

Tooke. The preliminaries are acceded to. *Hocus* then is *ocus*, out of use, or *ocius; pocus* is *pocis.*

Johnson. What is that?

Tooke. The ancient Romans, followed in this by the modern Italians, wrote *pocis* for *paucis*, *Clodius* for *Claudius*, *plodite* for *plaudite. Ocus pocis* is *quickly! at few words!* — the conjurer's word of command, as *præsto* is.

Johnson. You pronounced *paucis* as if the *c* was *k.*

Tooke. So did the Romans, we are taught by the Greek biographers and historians. They write Latin proper names according to the pronunciation: *Kikeron* not *Siseron*, *Kaisar* not *Sæsar;* which to their ears would have been as absurd as *Sato* would have been for *Cato.*

There are also some few inaccuracies whereinto our most applauded speakers and our least objectionable writers have fallen. For instance, *I had rather not go; you had better not do it.* This error arises from ambiguity of sound, — *I'd* rather, or *I'ou'd* rather; contractions of *would*, and pronounced more like *had.*[*]

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[*] "Poet who hath been building up the rhyme . . .
When he *had* better far *have* stretched his limbs
Beside a brook, in mossy forest dell." — COLERIDGE.

A similar instance has been given from Middleton: —

"A poet *had better* borrow any thing except money than the thoughts of another." — *Note to* DON JUAN, c. v.

If I am not mistaken, is often prefatory or parenthetical to an affirmative, in our language and most others. Nothing is absurder; for nothing is more self-evident than that a thing is this or that *if there is no mistake*. But by saying, for instance, "If I am not *much* mistaken, sir, you are Doctor Johnson," the absurdity in the stranger would be none; for he acknowledges a *great* mistake in taking you for another, or another for you. And the same may be said of any thing else on which inquiry or curiosity has been exercised.

Johnson. Sir, you mix up so much of compliment with so much of argument, that I know not how I can answer you, unless by saying that your observation on the phrase is perfectly correct, and that I believe it to be no less new.

Tooke. We do many things now which we never thought of doing formerly. We *contemplate* going to a ball and dancing a fandango; we are *installed* in a new lodging; we *place ourselves* in communication; we *take* tea, — this is an improvement, we used to *take* physic only; and then we *seek* our pillow, — of all things upon earth the most easily found, although sometimes the most unwillingly. We cannot bear an *indifferent* judge, or *indifferent* law, or *indifferent* history: we think them the reverse of what they are, — in one word, bad. But no wonder: we have been moving in a *high circle*, and beyond the *sphere* of utility; so that we fancy we have been *edified* by a sermon, and mistake a cluster of colleges for what it is most remote from, — a *university*.

Johnson. It is not we alone who do that.

Tooke. Answer enough for every objection. There are older peculiarities which require attention, and yet have not found it. You would say, *two or three times*.

Johnson. Why not?

Tooke. Because you would not say, *two times*.

Johnson. I should rather say *twice or thrice*. Certainly, as more elegant.

Tooke. Beside, it saves a word; no inconsiderable thing, when we find a large family of young thoughts springing up about us, and calling on us for decent clothing.

Johnson. You, who are fond enough of innovation in politics, are reluctant to admit any new improvement in our modes of composition. Doubtless you think it as elegant to close a member of a sentence, or the sentence itself, with *of*, *against*, *in*, *for*, as to write "with which to contend," "of which to speak," "against which to write," "in which to partake," "for which to be zealous."

Tooke. Not only as elegant, but much more. It is strictly idiomatical; it avoids an unnecessary word; and it is countenanced by the purest writers of Greece. The iambics of the tragedians (if that be any thing) sometimes end with such words as επι, παρα, περι, ῾υπο, ῾υπερ. I would rather close a sentence thus: *there is nobody to contend with*, than, *there is nobody with whom to contend;* rather with *there is none to fight against*, than *there is none with whom to fight.* Even the French formerly were not shocked at closing a sentence with *avec*, although little accordant with their language. We often hear, *the first among them.*

Johnson. Well, why not?

Tooke. Because what is *first*, or *before*, is not *among*.

Johnson. You might argue, then, that what is *before* is not *of*, and that it has ceased to be so when, in a nautical phrase, it has parted company; yet surely you do not object to the expression, "the first of them."

Tooke. It has not ceased to be *of* by being *before;* for *of* is *off*, however we may, for obvious reasons, separate them in the parts of speech. We perceive a slight shade of difference between *yet* and *still.* The most remarkable example of it was given by a great foreign linguist, who, conversing with an English prelate on many occasions and at many different times, committed but one mistake: "When this event happened I was not *still* born." *Above* and *over* are not always synonymous. We may say, *he wept over me;* we cannot say, *he wept above me.* The words *can not* remind me that these should always be separated, — a remark made by Ben Jonson, but never attended to. You are well-*read* and well-*spoken;* have you any objection to be well-*mounted?*

Johnson. Strange inversion of active and passive!

Tooke. What an outcry would be raised against you or me, if we applied a verb in the singular to several nouns!

Johnson. And justly.

Tooke. Yet elegance sometimes requires it, even in our own language. The Italian has not repudiated it: Metastasio says, —

"La mia Filli e la mia cetra
Sempre cara a me sarà:"

And Petrarca, —

"Benedetto si*a* il giorno e 'l mese e l'anno."

The best of the French poets and prose-writers have complied with it, and the Athenians cherished it.

Johnson. We look rather to the Latin.

Tooke. Even there, in the most common school-books, we find it. Virgil says, —

"Voc*at* ingenti clamore Cytheron
Täigetique canes domitorque Epidauras equorum."

The first page of Horace offers also an example: —

"Metaque fervidis
Evitata rotis palmaque nobilis
Terrarum dominos eveh*i*t ad deos."

And again, —

"Dum pudor
Imbellisque lyræ musa potens vet*at*."

Johnson. These are strong instances; but I would rather you adduced an authority from some great writer in prose.

Tooke. I will adduce one from the most unquestionable of all Latin grammarians, Quintilian: "Et animantium quoque sermone carentium ira, lætitia, adulatio, et oculis et quibusdam aliis corporis signis deprehend*i*tur."

Milton writes, —

"That hill and valley rings." — B. 2. v. 496.

And in his prose, "Yet ease and leisure *was*."

We have lately seen such words as *carry out* and *open up*. Who would not think that *carry out* a measure signifies to reject it or dismiss it; whereas it is forced to say quite the contrary, *carry into* effect. To "open *up*" is no less wrong than to *examine into*: *up* is redundant, *into* is inapplicable, for to examine is to *weigh out*. But where we are pleased, improprieties pass by unnoticed. In Shakspeare we have (not of Shakspeare, however, but of the printer), —

"I never yet did hear
That the bruised heart was pierced through the ear."

As we read these verses they are nonsense. It should be *pieced* (made whole again), not *pierced* (made sensible). Being "bruised," it could not want this.

Johnson. This reading never occurred to me. Have you any more?

Tooke. Several, and quite as obvious. But let us rather walk back again to the old serviceable words we left behind.

Johnson. And now, pray, what more would you antiquate?

Tooke. Whatever is reasonable. Can it be questioned that *friend* written *frend*, as we pronounce it and as good authors wrote it formerly, is better? If we write, as we do, *diameter* and *thermometer*, should we not also *meter?* Just now we were speaking of *who* and *which*. In the Litany, "Our father *which* art in heaven," is often read by conceited young clergymen, "*who* art."

Johnson. I would strip their gowns over their shoulders.

Tooke. To some purpose, I hope. Waller writes, —

> "Let those *which* only warble love,
> And gargle in their throat."

Johnson. In that poem, addressed to Henry Lawes, Waller's expression is more vigorous and happy than usual, especially in the following words, —

> "Make a *shrill sally* from the breast."

He wrote as elegantly as South.

Tooke. No high compliment. South was clever and dexterous. Throw out a flimsy and showy argument to him, and he will bite it to pieces from between his ruffles as a lapdog an embroidered glove. He spells many words rightly: for example, *scepter*, *counsils*, *exil*, *honor*, *public*, *proclame*, *procede*, *humor*, *sutable*, *onely*, *woolfe;* others wrongly: for example, *doe* (do), *hapned*, *weakned*, *heightned*, *hardned*, *souldier*, *publique*, *daign*, *supream*. He uses *act* for *actuate*, — "Petty tyrants acted by party," "acts the whole man." Then, "What course have we *took* to allure the former?" "The most effectual way to destroy religion is to embase (debase) the teachers and dispensers of it." Worst of all, "Their opinions *wholly* divided." Here the word is first badly spelled, for whole must be *wholy* or *wholely*, as *sole* is *soly* or *solely:* the adverb cannot have a double *l* if the adjective has a single one. I have before remarked this.

Johnson. Sir, I would rather you found faults in South than authority in Hume.

Tooke. Certainly the others were quite sufficient without him. I would only demonstrate by it that the practice has continued down to the present day in an unbroken line of good authors.

Johnson. I am not to be guided in my language by a Scotchman.

Tooke. Then take any of the others you prefer. Archibald Bower is a Scotchman, yet he writes with almost as much purity as Blackstone himself. But, Doctor, why this hostility to writers who never have molested you? It seems wonderful that you should hate the nation as you do, — a nation which would have restored the prince you reverenced. If there were any worth in him of any kind whatever, it might have created a desire to see him supersede the occupant of his grandfather's throne, provided we could be sure of his maintaining the religion and liberties of the people. But since no member of that family ever had honor enough to maintain his word, or religion enough to observe his oath, your probity would surely suppress your predilection.

Johnson. Kings, good or bad, are not to be roughly handled or irreverently approached.

Tooke. If the nation looks at them for an example, and finds the example a bad one; if those nearest their persons imitate them; if the imitation goes on in exaggerated lines, until in every house and bed-chamber there is a copy of it, — the mischief is enormous, and it may continue far beyond our calculation. Never do even the best kings sympathize deeply with the sufferings of the people. Their preachers and courtiers take out the heart and entrails, put strong spices in room of them, stroke the plumage softly down, infix false eyes, and place them in glass cases out of reach.

Johnson. Out of reach! So they should be.

Tooke. Has the practice been successful in the princes you supported? or does it promise any better success in those who supersede them?

Johnson. You would have none.

Tooke. You mistake. Hereditary kings are the only safeguards for us; and theirs is the only station I wish to be hereditary. I have seen a child born to a large fortune, so carefully wrapped up, so protected from a breath of air, that his estate, when he came to possess it, was no enjoyment to him; in like manner is the seclusion of princes from the people injurious to them, infecting their moral vigor, and contracting the action of the heart. I do not blame any attachment in which pity and generosity are concerned. But if you commiserate the Stuarts, spare at least the nation which rose in arms for their defence, and whose shouts of enthusiasm you might almost have heard at Lichfield.

Johnson. I heard them nearer; but no more on that. Prejudices I may have; for what man is without them? but mine, sir, are not such as tend to the relaxation of morals, the throwing down of distinctions, the withholding of tribute to whom tribute is due, honor to whom honor. You and your tribe are no more favorable to liberty than I am. The chief difference is, and the difference is wide indeed, that I would give the larger part of it to the most worthy, you to the most unworthy. I would exact a becoming deference from inferiors to superiors; and I would not remove my neighbor's land-mark, swearing in open court that there never was any but an imaginary line between the two parties. Depend upon it, if the time should come when you gentlemen of the hustings have persuaded the populace that they may hoot down and trample on men of integrity and information, you yourself will lead an uncomfortable life, and they a restless and profitless one. No man is happier than he who, being in a humble station, is treated with affability and kindness by one in a higher. Do you believe that any opposition, any success, against this higher can afford the same pleasure? If you do, little have you lived among the people whose cause you patronize, little know you of their character and nature. We are happy by the interchange of kind offices, and even by the expression of good-will. Heat and animosity, contest and conflict, may sharpen the wits, although they rarely do; they never strengthen the understanding, clear the perspicacity, guide the judgment, or improve the heart.

IX. DAVID HUME AND JOHN HOME.

Hume. We Scotchmen, sir, are somewhat proud of our families and relationships: this is however a nationality which perhaps I should not have detected in myself, if I had not been favored with the flattering present of your tragedy. Our names, as often happens, are spelled differently; but I yielded with no reluctance to the persuasion that we are, and not very distantly, of the same stock.

Home. I hope, sir, our mountains will detain you among them some time, and I presume to promise you that you will find in Edinburgh a society as polished and literate as in Paris.

Hume. As literate I can easily believe, my cousin, and perhaps as polished, if you reason upon the ingredients of polish; but there is certainly much more amenity and urbanity at Paris than anywhere else in the world, and people there are less likely to give and take offence. All topics may be discussed without arrogance and superciliousness: an atheist would see you worship a stool or light a candle at noon without a sneer at you; and a bishop, if you were well-dressed and perfumed, would argue with you calmly and serenely, though you doubted the whole Athanasian creed.

Home. So much the worse: God forbid we should ever experience this lukewarmness in Scotland!

Hume. God, it appears, has forbidden it; for which reason, to show my obedience and submission, I live as much as possible in France, where at present God has forbidden no such thing.

Home. Religion, my dear sir, can alone make men happy and keep them so.

Hume. Nothing is better calculated to make men happy than religion, if you will allow them to manage it according to their minds; in which case the strong men hunt down others until they can fold them, entrap them, or noose them. Here, however, let the discussion terminate. Both of us have been in a cherry orchard, and have observed the advantages of the jacket, hat, and rattle.

Home. Our reformed religion does not authorize any line of conduct diverging from right reason: we are commanded by it to speak the truth to all men.

Hume. Are you likewise commanded to hear it from all men?

Home. Yes, let it only be proved to be truth.

Hume. I doubt the observance: you will not even let the fact be proved; you resist the attempt; you blockade the preliminaries. Religion, as you practise it in Scotland, in some cases is opposite to reason and subversive of happiness.

Home. In what instance?

Hume. If you had a brother whose wife was unfaithful to him without his suspicion; if he lived with her happily; if he had children by her; if others of which he was fond could be proved by you, and you only, not to be his, — what would you do?

Home. Oh the harlot! we have none such here, excepting the wife indeed (as we hear she is) of a little lame blear-eyed lieutenant, brought with him from Sicily, and bearing an Etna of her own about her, and truly no quiescent or intermittent one, which Mungo Murray (the apprentice of Hector Abercrombie) tells me has engulfed half the dissolutes in the parish. Of the married men who visited her, there was never one whose boot did not pinch him soon after, or the weather was no weather for corns and rheumatisms, or he must e'en go to Glasgow to look after a bad debt, the times being too ticklish to bear losses. I run into this discourse, not fearing that another philosopher will, like Empedocles, precipitate himself into the crater, but merely to warn you against the husband, whose intrepidity on entering the houses of strangers has caught many acute and wary folks. After the first compliments, he will lament to you that elegant and solid literature is more neglected in our days than it ever was. He will entreat you to recommend him to your bookseller; his own having been too much enriched by him had grown insolent. It is desirable that it should be one who could advance three or four guineas: not that he cares about the money, but that it is always best to have a check upon these people. You smile: he has probably joined you in the street already, and found his way into your study, and requested of you *by the bye* a trifling loan, as being the only person in the world with whom he could take such a liberty.

Hume. You seem to forget that I am but just arrived, and never knew him.

Home. That is no impediment: on the contrary, it is a reason the more. A new face is as inviting to him as to the mosquitoes in America. If you lend him a guinea to be rid of him, he will declare the next day that he borrowed it at your own request, and that he returned it the same evening.

Hume. Such men perhaps may have their reasons for being here; but the woman must be, as people say, like a fish out of water. Again to the question. Come now, if you had a brother, I was supposing, whose wife —

Home. Out upon her! should my brother cohabit with her? Should my nephews be defrauded of their patrimony by bastards?

Hume. You would then destroy his happiness, and his children's; for, supposing that you preserved to them a scanty portion more of fortune (which you could not do), still the shame they would feel from their mother's infamy would much outweigh it.

Home. I do not see clearly that this is a question of religion.

Hume. All the momentous actions of religious men are referable to their religion, more or less nearly; all the social duties, and surely these are implicated here, are connected with it. Suppose again that you knew a brother and sister, who, born in different countries, met at last, ignorant of their affinity, and married.

Home. Poor, blind, sinful creatures! God be merciful to them!

Hume. I join you heartily in the prayer, and would only add to it, Man be merciful to them also! Imagine them to have lived together ten years, to have a numerous and happy family, to come and reside in your parish, and the attestation of their prior relationship to be made indubitable to you by some document which alone could establish and record it: what would you do?

Home. I would snap asunder the chain that the devil had ensnared them in, even if he stood before me; I would implore God to pardon them, and to survey with an eye of mercy their unoffending bairns.

Hume. And would not you be disposed to behold them with an eye of the same materials?

Home. Could I leave them in mortal sin, a prey to the ensnarer of souls? No, I would rush between them as with a flaming sword; I would rescue them by God's help from perdition.

Hume. What misery and consternation would this rescue bring with it!

Home. They would call upon the hills to cover them, to crush and extinguish their shame.

Hume. Those who had lived together in love and innocence and felicity? A word spoken to them by their pastor brings them into irremediable guilt and anguish. And you would do this?

Home. The laws of God are above all other laws: his ways are inscrutable: thick darkness covers his throne.

Hume. My cousin, you who have written so elegant and pathetic a tragedy cannot but have read the best-contrived one in existence, the *Œdipus* of Sophocles.

Home. It has wrung my heart; it has deluged my eyes with weeping.

Hume. Which would you rather do,—cause and excite those sufferings, or assuage and quell them?

Home. Am I a Scotchman or an islander of the Red Sea, that a question like this should be asked me?

Hume. You would not then have given to Œdipus that information which drove him and Jocasta to despair?

Home. As a Christian and a minister of the gospel, I am commanded to defy the devil, and to burst asunder the bonds of sin.

Hume. I am certain you would be greatly pained in doing it.

Home. I should never overcome the grief and anxiety so severe a duty would cause me.

Hume. You have now proved, better than I could have done in twenty *Essays*, that, if morality is not religion, neither is religion morality. Either of them, to be good (and the one must be and the other should be so), will produce good effects from the beginning to the end, and be followed by no remorse or repentance.

It would be presumptuous in me to quote the Bible to you, who are so much more conversant in it; yet I cannot refrain from repeating, for my own satisfaction, the beautiful sentence on holiness: that "all her ways are pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." It says, not one or two paths, but *all*: for vice hath one or two passably pleasant in the season, if we could forget that, when we would return, the road is difficult to find, and must be picked out in the dark. Imagine any thing in the semblance of a duty attended by regret and sorrow, and be assured that holiness has no concern in it. Admonition, it is true, is sometimes of such a nature, from that of the irregularity it would correct, as to occasion a sigh or a blush to him who gives it: in this case, the sensation so manifested adds weight to the reproof and indemnifies the reprover. He is happy to have done what from generosity and tenderness of heart he was sorry and slow to do; and the person in whose behalf he acted must be degraded beneath the dignity of manhood, if he feels less for himself than another has felt for him. The regret is not at the performance of his duty, but at the failure of its effect.

To produce as much happiness as we can, and to prevent as much misery, is the proper aim and end of true morality and true religion. Only give things their right direction: do but place and train them well, and there is room to move easily and pleasantly in the midst of them.

Home. What! in the midst of vice and wickedness? And must we place and train those?

Hume. There was a time when what is wine was not wine, when what is vinegar was not vinegar, when what is corruption was not corruption. That which would turn into vice may not only not turn into it, but may, by discreet and attentive management, become the ground-work of virtue. A little watchfulness over ourselves will save us a great deal of watchfulness over others, and will permit the kindliest of religions to drop her inconvenient and unseemly talk of enmity and strife, cuirasses and breastplates, battles and exterminations.

Home. These carnal terms are frequent in the books of the Old Testament.

Hume. Because the books of the Old Testament were written when the world was much more barbarous and ferocious than it is at present; and legislators must accommodate their language to the customs and manners of the country.

Home. Apparently you would rather abolish the forcible expressions of our pious reformers, than the abominations at which their souls revolted. I am afraid you would hesitate as little to demolish kirks as convents, to drive out ministers as monks.

Hume. I would let ministers and their kirks alone. I would abolish monasteries, but gradually and humanely; and not until I had discovered how and where the studious and pious could spend their time better. I hold religion in the light of a medal which has contracted rust from ages. This rust seems to have been its preserver for many centuries, but after some few more will certainly be its consumer, and leave no vestige of effigy or superscription behind: it should be detached carefully and patiently, not ignorantly and rudely scoured off. Happiness may be taken away from many with the design of communicating it to more: but that which is a grateful and refreshing odor in a limited space would be none whatever in a larger; that which is comfortable warmth to the domestic circle would not awaken the chirping of a cricket, or stimulate the flight of a butterfly, in the forest; that which satisfies a hundred poor monks would, if thrown open to society at large, contribute not an atom to its benefit and emolument. Placid tempers, regulated habitudes, consolatory visitations, are suppressed and destroyed, and nothing rises from their ruins. Better let the cell be standing, than level it only for the thorn and nettle.

Home. What good do these idlers with their cords and wallets, or, if you please, with their regularities?

Hume. These have their value, at least to the possessor and the few about him. Ask rather, what is the worth of his abode to the prince or to the public? Who is the wiser for his cowl, the warmer for his frock, the more contented for his cloister, when they are taken from him? Monks, it is true, are only as stars that shine upon the desert; but tell me, I beseech you, who caused such a desert in the moral world, and who rendered so faint a light, in some of its periods, a blessing? Ignorant rulers, must be the answer, and inhuman laws. They should cease to exist some time before their antidotes, however ill-compounded, are cast away.

If we had lived seven or eight centuries ago, John Home would probably have been saying Mass at the altar, and David Hume, fatter and lazier, would have been pursuing his theological studies in the convent. We are so much the creatures of times and seasons, so modified and fashioned by them, that the very plants upon the wall, if they were as sensible as some suppose them to be, would laugh at us.

Home. Fantastic forms and ceremonies are rather what the philosopher will reprehend. Strip away these, reduce things to their primitive state of purity and holiness, and nothing can alter or shake us, clinging, as we should, to the anchor of faith.

Hume. People clung to it long ago; but many lost their grasp, benumbed by holding too tightly. The Church of Scotland brings close together the objects of veneration and abhorrence. The evil principle, or devil, was, in my opinion, hardly worth the expense of his voyage from Persia; but, since you have him, you seem resolved to treat him nobly, hating him, defying him, and fearing him nevertheless. I would not, however, place him so very near the Creator, let his pretensions, from custom and precedent, be what they may.

Home. He is always marring the fair works of our Heavenly Father: in this labor is his only proximity.

Hume. You represent him as spurring men on to wickedness, from no other motive than the pleasure he experiences in rendering them miserable.

Home. He has no other, excepting his inveterate spite and malice against God; from which indeed, to speak more properly, this desire originates.

Hume. Has he lost his wits, as well as his station, that he fancies he can render God unhappy by being spiteful and malicious? You wrong him greatly; but you wrong God more. For in all Satan's attempts to seduce men into wickedness, he leaves every one his free will either to resist or yield; but the Heavenly Father, as you would represent him, predestines the greater part of mankind to everlasting pains and torments, antecedently to corruption or temptation. There is no impiety in asking you which is the worst: for impiety most certainly does not consist in setting men right on what is demonstrable in their religion, nor in proving to them that God is greater and better than, with all their zeal for him, they have ever thought him.

Home. This is to confound religion with philosophy, the source of nearly every evil in conduct and of every error in ethics.

Hume. Religion is the eldest sister of Philosophy: on whatever subjects they may differ, it is unbecoming in either to quarrel, and most so about their inheritance.

Home. And have you nothing, sir, to say against the pomps and vanities of other worships, that you should assail the institutions of your native country? To fear God, I must suppose, then, is less meritorious than to build steeples, and embroider surplices, and compose chants, and blow the bellows of organs.

Hume. My dear sir, it is not because God is delighted with hymns and instruments of music, or prefers bass to tenor or tenor to bass, or Handel to Giles Halloway, that nations throng to celebrate in their churches his power and his beneficence; it is not that Inigo Jones or Christopher Wren could erect to him a habitation more worthy of his presence than the humblest cottage on the loneliest moor: it is that the best feelings, the highest faculties, the greatest wealth, should be displayed and exercised in the patrimonial palace of every family united. For such are churches both to the rich and poor.

Home. Your hand, David! Pardon me, sir: the sentiment carried me beyond custom; for it recalled to me the moments of blissful enthusiasm when I was writing my tragedy, and charmed me the more as coming from you.

Hume. I explain the causes of things, and leave them.

Home. Go on, sir, pray go on; for here we can walk together. Suppose that God never heard us, never cared for us: do those care for you or hear you whose exploits you celebrate at public dinners, — our Wallaces and Bruces? Yet are not we thence the braver, the more generous, the more grateful?

Hume. I do not see clearly how the more grateful; but I would not analyze by reducing to a cinder a lofty sentiment.

Home. Surely we are grateful for the benefits our illustrious patriots have conferred on us; and every act of gratitude is rewarded by reproduction. Justice is often pale and melancholy; but Gratitude, her daughter, is constantly in the flow of spirits and the bloom of loveliness. You call out to her when you fancy she is passing; you want her for your dependants, your domestics, your friends, your children. The ancients, as you know, habitually asked their gods and goddesses by which of their names it was most agreeable to them to be invoked: now let Gratitude be, what for the play of our fancy we have just imagined her, a sentient living power; I cannot think of any name more likely to be pleasing to her than Religion. The simplest breast often holds more reason in it than it knows of, and more than Philosophy looks for or suspects. We almost as frequently despise what is not despicable as we admire and reverence what is. No nation in the world was ever so enlightened, and in all parts and qualities so civilized, as the Scotch. Why would you shake or unsettle or disturb those principles which have rendered us peaceable and contented?

Hume. I would not by any means.

Home. Many of your writings have evidently such a tendency.

Hume. Those of my writings to which you refer will be read by no nation: a few speculative men will take them; but none will be rendered more gloomy, more dissatisfied, or more unsocial by them. Rarely will you find one who, five minutes together, can fix his mind even on the surface: some new tune, some idle project, some light thought, some impracticable wish, will generally run, like the dazzling haze of summer on the dry heath, betwixt them and the reader. A bagpipe will swallow them up, a strathspey will dissipate them, or Romance with the death-rattle in her throat will drive them away into dark staircases and charnel-houses.

You and I, in the course of our conversation, have been at variance, as much as discreet and honest men ought to be: each knows that the other thinks differently from him, yet each esteems the other. I cannot but smile when I reflect that a few paces, a glass of wine, a cup of tea, conciliate those whom Wisdom would keep asunder.

Home. No wonder you scoff emphatically, as you pronounce the word *wisdom*.

Hume. If men would permit their minds like their children to associate freely together, if they would agree to meet one another with smiles and frankness, instead of suspicion and defiance, the common stock of intelligence and of happiness would be centupled. Probably those two men who hate each other most, and whose best husbandry is to sow burs and thistles in each other's path, would, if they had ever met and conversed familiarly, have been ardent and inseparable friends. The minister who may order my book to be burned to-morrow by the hangman, if I, by any accident, had been seated yesterday by his side at dinner, might perhaps in another fortnight recommend me to his master, for a man of such gravity and understanding as to be worthy of being a privy councillor, and might conduct me to the treasury-bench.

X. ALFIERI AND SALOMON THE FLORENTINE JEW.

Alfieri. Let us walk to the window, signor Salomon. And now, instead of the silly, simpering compliments repeated at introductions, let me assure you that you are the only man in Florence with whom I would willingly exchange a salutation.

Salomon. I must think myself highly flattered, signor Conte, having always heard that you are not only the greatest democrat, but also the greatest aristocrat, in Europe.

Alfieri. These two things, however opposite, which your smile would indicate, are not so irreconcilable as you imagine. Let us first understand the words, and then talk about them. The democrat is he who wishes the people to have a due share in the government, and this share if you please shall be the principal one. The aristocrat of our days is contented with no actual share in it; but if a man of family is conscious of his dignity, and resentful that another has invaded it, he may be, and is universally, called an aristocrat. The principal difference is, that one carries outward what the other carries inward. I am thought an aristocrat by the Florentines for conversing with few people, and for changing my shirt and shaving my beard on other days than festivals; which the most aristocratical of them never do, considering it, no doubt, as an excess. I am, however, from my soul a republican, if prudence and modesty will authorize any man to call himself so; and this, I trust, I have demonstrated in the most valuable of my works, the *Treatise on Tyranny* and the *Dialogue* with my friend at Siena. The aristocratical part of me, if part of me it must be called, hangs loose and keeps off insects. I see no aristocracy in the children of sharpers from behind the counter, nor, placing the matter in the most favorable point of view, in the descendants of free citizens who accepted from any vile enslaver — French, Spanish, German, or priest, or monk (represented with a piece of buffoonery, like a beehive on his head and a picklock key at his girdle) — the titles of counts and marquises. In Piedmont the matter is different: we must either have been the rabble or their lords; we were military, and we retain over the populace the same rank and spirit as our ancestors held over the soldiery. But we are as prone to slavery as they were averse and reluctant.

Under the best of princes we are children all our lives. Under the worse, we are infinitely more degraded than the wretches who are reduced to their servitude by war, or even by crimes; begging our master to take away from us the advantages of our education, and of our strength in mind and body. Is this picture overcharged?

Salomon. Not with bright colors certainly.

Alfieri. What think you then if we are threatened with hell by those who take away earth from us, and scourge and imprison and torture us?

Salomon. Hell is a very indifferent hospital for those who are thrust into it with broken bones. It is hard indeed, if they who lame you will not let you limp. Indeed I do hear, signor Conte, that the churchmen call you an atheist and a leveller.

Alfieri. So, during the plague at Milan, if a man walked upright in the midst of it, and without a sore about him, he was a devil or an *anointer:* it was a crime and a curse not to be infected. But, signor Salomon, a poet never can be an atheist, nor can a gentleman be a leveller. For my part, I would rather walk alone in a rugged path than with the many in a smoother.

Salomon. Signor Conte, I have heard of levellers, but I have never seen one: all are disposed to level down, but nobody to level up. As for nobility, there is none in Europe beside the Venetian. Nobility must be self-constituted and independent: the free alone are noble; slavery, like death, levels all. The English comes nearest to the Venetian: they are independent, but want the main characteristic, the *self-constituted.* You have been in England, signor Conte, and can judge of them better than I can.

Alfieri. England, as you know, is governed by Pitt, the most insidious of her demagogues, and the most hostile to aristocracy. Jealous of power, and distrustful of the people that raised him to it, he enriches and attaches to him the commercial part of the nation by the most wasteful prodigality both in finance and war, and he loosens from the landed the chief proprietors by raising them to the peerage. Nearly a third of the lords have been created by him, and prove themselves devotedly his creatures. This Empusa puts his ass's foot on the French, and his iron one on the English. He possesses not the advantage possessed by insects, which, if they see but one inch before them, see that inch distinctly. He knows not that the machine which runs on so briskly will fall to pieces the moment it stops. He will indeed carry his point in debasing the aristocracy; but he will equally debase the people. Undivided power he will continue to enjoy; but, after his death, none will be able to say from any visible proof or appearance, *How glorious a people did he govern!* He will have changed its character in all ranks and conditions. After this it is little to say that he will have exalted its rival, who, without his interposition, would have sunk under distress and crime. But interposition was necessary to his aggrandizement, enabling him to distribute in twenty years, if he should live so long, more wealth among his friends and partisans, than has been squandered by the uncontrolled profusion of French monarchs, from the first Louis to the last.

Salomon. How happens it that England, richer and more powerful than other States, should still contain fewer nobles?

Alfieri. The greater part of the English nobility has neither power nor title. Even those who are noble by right of possession, the hereditary lords of manors with large estates attached to them, claim no titles at home or abroad. Hence in all foreign countries the English gentleman is placed below his rank, which naturally and necessarily is far higher than that of your slipshod counts and lottery-office marquises, whose gamekeepers, with their high plumes, cocked hats, and hilts of rapiers, have no other occupation than to stand behind the carriage, if the rotten plank will bear them; whose game is the wren and redbreast, and whose beat is across the market.

Menestrier, who both as a Frenchman and as a Jesuit speaks contemptuously of English nobility, admits the gentlemen to this dignity. Their property, their information, their political influence, and their moral character place them beyond measure above the titularies of our country, be the rank what it may; and it is a remarkable proof of moderation in some, and of contemptuousness in others, that they do not openly claim from their king, or assume without such intervention, the titles arising from landed wealth, which conciliate the attention and civility of every class, and indeed of every individual abroad.

It is among those who stand between the peerage and the people that there exists a greater mass of virtue and of wisdom than in the rest of Europe. Much of their dignified simplicity may be attributed to the plainness of their religion, and, what will always be imitated, to the decorous life of their king; for whatever may be the defects of either, if we compare them with others round us, they are excellent.

Salomon. A young religion jumps upon the shoulders of an older one, and soon becomes like her, by mockery of her tricks, her cant, and her decrepitude. Meanwhile the old one shakes with indignation, and swears there is neither relationship nor likeness. Was there ever a religion in the world that was not the true religion, or was there ever a king that was not the best of kings?

Alfieri. In the latter case we must have arrived nigh perfection; since it is evident from the authority of the gravest men — theologians, presidents, judges, corporations, universities, senates — that every prince is better than his father, "of blessed memory, now with God." If they continue to rise thus transcendently, earth in a little time will be incapable of holding them, and higher heavens must be raised upon the highest heavens for their reception. The lumber of our Italian courts, the most crazy part of which is that which rests upon a red cushion in a gilt chair, with stars and sheep and crosses dangling from it, must be approached as Artaxerxes and Domitian. These automatons, we are told nevertheless, are very condescending. Poor fools who tell us it! ignorant that where on one side is condescension, on the other side must be baseness. The rascals have ruined my physiognomy. I wear an habitual sneer upon my face; God confound them for it!

Salomon. This temper or constitution of mind I am afraid may do injury to your works.

Alfieri. Surely not to all: my satire at least must be the better for it.

Salomon. I think differently. No satire can be excellent where displeasure is expressed with acrimony and vehemence. When satire ceases to smile, it should be momentarily, and for the purpose of inculcating a moral. Juvenal is hardly more a satirist than Lucan: he is indeed a vigorous and bold declaimer, but he stamps too often, and splashes up too much filth. We Italians have no delicacy in wit: we have indeed no conception of it; we fancy we must be weak if we are not offensive. The scream of Pulcinello is imitated more easily than the masterly strokes of Plautus, or the sly insinuations of Catullus and of Flaccus.

Alfieri. We are the least witty of men because we are the most trifling.

Salomon. You would persuade me then that to be witty one must be grave: this is surely a contradiction.

Alfieri. I would persuade you only that banter, pun, and quibble are the properties of light men and shallow capacities; that genuine humor and true wit require a sound and capacious mind, which is always a grave one. Contemptuousness is not incompatible with them: worthless is that man who feels no contempt for the worthless, and weak who treats their emptiness as a thing of weight. At first it may seem a paradox, but it is perfectly true, that the gravest nations have been the wittiest; and in those nations some of the gravest men. In England Swift and Addison, in Spain Cervantes. Rabelais and La Fontaine are recorded by their countrymen to have been *rêveurs.* Few men have been graver than Pascal; few have been wittier.

Salomon. It is indeed a remarkable thing that such should be the case among the moderns: it does not appear to have been so among the ancients.

Alfieri. I differ from you, M. Salomon. When we turn toward the Athenians, we find many comic writers, but few facetious. Menander, if we may judge from his fragments, had less humor than Socrates. Quintilian says of Demosthenes, "non displicuisse illi jocos sed non contigisse." In this he was less fortunate than Phocion and Cicero. Facility in making men smile gives a natural air to a great orator, and adds thereby much effect to what he says, provided it come discreetly. It is in him somewhat like affability in a prince; excellent if used with caution. Every one must have perceived how frequently those are brought over by a touch of humor who have resisted the force of argument and entreaty. Cicero thought in this manner on wit. Writing to his brother, he mentions a letter from him, "Aristophanico modo, valde mehercule et suavem et gravem." Among the Romans, the gravest nation after the English, I think Cicero and Catullus were the wittiest. Cicero from his habits of life and studies must have been grave; Catullus we may believe to have been so, from his being tender and impassioned in the more serious part of his poetry.

Salomon. This is to me no proof; for the most tender and impassioned of all poets is Shakspeare, who certainly was himself far removed from gravity, however much of it he imparted to some personages of his drama.

Alfieri. That Shakspeare was gay and pleasurable in conversation I can easily admit; for there never was a mind at once so plastic and so pliant: but, without much gravity, could there have been that potency and comprehensiveness of thought, that depth of feeling, that creation of imperishable ideas, that sojourn in the souls of other men? He was amused in his workshop: such was society. But when he left it, he meditated intensely upon those limbs and muscles on which he was about to bestow new action, grace, and majesty; and so great an intensity of meditation must have strongly impressed his whole character.

Salomon. You will, however, allow that we have no proof of gravity in Horace or Plautus.

Alfieri. On the contrary, I think we have many. Horace, like all the pusillanimous, was malignant: like all courtiers, he yielded to the temper of his masters. His lighter touches were agreeable less to his own nature than to the nature of Augustus and Mecænas, both of them fond of trifling; but in his *Odes* and his *Discourses* there is more of gravity than of gayety. That he was libidinous is no proof that he was playful; for often such men are even melancholic.

Plautus, rich in language, rich in reflection, rich in character, is oftener graver than could have suited the inclinations of a coarse and tumultuous populace. What but the strong bent of his nature could have moved him to it? The English display an equal share of facetiousness and of *humor* (as they call it) in their comedies.

Salomon. I do not understand the distinction.

Alfieri. Nor indeed is it well understood by many of their best authors. It is no uncommon thing to hear, "*He has humor rather than wit.*" Here the expression can only mean *pleasantry:* for whoever has humor has wit, although it does not follow that whoever has wit has humor. Humor is wit appertaining to character, and indulges in breadth of drollery rather than in play and brilliancy of point. Wit vibrates and spurts; humor springs up exuberantly, as from a fountain, and runs on. In Congreve you wonder what he will say next: in Addison you repose on what is said, listening with assured expectation of something congenial and pertinent. The French have little humor because they have little character: they excel all nations in wit, because of their levity and sharpness. The personages on their theatre are generic.

Salomon. You do allow that they are facetious: from you no small concession.

Alfieri. This I do concede to them; and no person will accuse me of partiality in their favor. Not only are they witty, but when they discover a witty thing, they value it so highly that they reserve it for the noblest purposes, such as tragedies, sermons, and funeral orations. Whenever a king of theirs is inaugurated at Rheims, a string of witticisms is prepared for him during his whole reign, regularly as the civil list; regularly as menageries, oratories, orangeries, wife, confessor, waterworks, fireworks, gardens, parks, forests, and chases. Sometimes one is put into his mouth when he is too empty, sometimes when he is too full; but he always hath his due portion, take it when or how he may. A decent one, somewhat less indeed than that of their sovereign, is reserved for the princes of the blood; the greater part of which is usually packed up with their camp-equipage; and I have seen a label to a *bon mot*, on which was written, "Brillant comme la réponse de Henri IV. quand," — but the occasion had not been invented.

We Italians sometimes fall into what, if you will not call it witticism, you may call the plasma of witticism, by mere mistake, and against our genius. A blunder, by its very stumbling, is often carried a little beyond what was aimed at, and falls upon something which, if it be not wit, is invested with its powers.

Salomon. I have had opportunities to observe the obtuseness of the Tuscans in particular on these matters. Lately I lent my Molière to a man of talents; and when he returned the volumes, I asked him how he liked them: *Per Bacco*, he exclaimed, "the names are very comical, — Sguanarelli and those others." They who have no wit of their own are ignorant of it when it occurs, mistake it, and misapply it. A sailor found upon the shore a piece of amber; he carried it home, and, as he was fond of fiddling, began to rub it across the strings of his violin. It would not answer. He then broke some pieces off, boiled them in blacking, and found to his surprise and disquiet that it gave no fresh lustre to the shoe-leather. "What are you about?" cried a messmate. "Smell it, man: it is amber." "The devil take it," cried the finder, "I fancied it was resin;" and he threw it into the sea. We despise what we cannot use.

Alfieri. Your observations on Italian wit are correct. Even our comedies are declamatory: long speeches and inverted sentences overlay and stifle the elasticity of humor. The great Machiavelli is, whatever M. de Voltaire may assert to the contrary, a coarse comedian; hardly better than the cardinal Bibiena, poisoned by the Holiness of our Lord Pope Leo for wearying him with wit.*

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* If Cardinal Bibiena was poisoned by Leo, an opinion to which the profligacy of the pope gave rise, and the malignity of men reception, it should be recorded in justice to his Holiness that he wished to protect the family. We find among the letters of Bembo a very beautiful and energetic one, written in the name of Leo to Francis I., relating to Bibiena. There is something not unsuspicious in the mode of expression, where he repeats that, although Bibiena thinks himself sure of dying, *there appears to be no immediate danger . . . if it should happen*, &c. "Cum Bernardus Bibiena cardinalis aliquot jam dies ex *stomacho*

Salomon. His Holiness took afterward a stirrup-cup of the same brewery, and never had committed the same offence, poor man! I should have thought the opinion of Voltaire less erroneous on wit, although it carries no weight with it on poetry or harmony.

laboret, *magisque timore quodam suo quam morbi vi urgente*, brevi se existimet moriturum. . . . Quanquam enim nihildum sane video, quo quidem de illius vitâ sit omnino magnopere timendum. Si id accidat quod ipse *suspicatur*, tua in illum munificentia tuumque præclarum munus non statim neque unà cum ipsius vitâ extinguatur, præsertim cum ei tam breve temporis spatium illo ipso tuo munere frui licuerit, ut ante amissum videri possit quam quale quantumve fuerit percipi ab illo cognoscive potuerit. . . . Ut ipse, si moriendum ei sit," &c.

The Italians are too credulous on poison, which at one period was almost a natural death among them. Englishmen were shocked at the confidence with which they asserted it of two personages, who occupied in the world a rank and interest due to neither, and one of whom died in England, the other in Elba.

The last words of the letter are ready to make us unbelievers of Leo's guilt in this business. What exquisite language! what expressions of zeal and sincerity!

"Quæ quidem omnia non tam propterea colligo, quod non illud unum existimem apud te plurimum valiturum, amorem scilicet erga illum tuum, itemque incredibilem ipsius in te cultum, quod initio dixi, sed ut mihi ipsi, qui id magnopere cupio, satisfaciam; ne perfamiliari ac pernecessario meo, mihique charissimo ac suavissimo atque in omni vitæ munere probatissimo, mea benevolentia meusque amor hoc extremo ejus vitæ tempore, si hoc extremum erit, plane defuisse videatur."

In the tenth book of these epistles there is one addressed to the Cardinal, by which the Church of Loretto is placed under his care, with every rank of friendship and partiality.

"De tuâ enim in Divam pietate, in rem Romanam studio, in me autem, cui quidem familiæque meæ omnia pæne usque a puero summæ cum integritatis et fidei, tum vero curæ atque diligentiæ egregia atque præclara officia præstitisti, perveteri observantiâ voluntateque admonitus, nihil est rerum omnium quod tibi recte mandari credique posse non existimem."

It is not in human nature that a man ever capable of these feelings toward any one should poison him, when no powerful interest or deep revenge was to be gratified: the opinion, nevertheless, has prevailed; and it may be attributed to a writer not altogether free from malignity, a scorner of popes and princes, and especially hostile to the Medicean family. Paolo Giovio says that Bibiena was poisoned in a *fresh egg*. The sixteenth century was *the age of poison*. Bibiena was poisoned, we may believe; not, however, by Leo, who loved him as being his preceptor. Leo sent him into France to persuade Francis I. to enter into a league against the Turks. The object of this league was to divert both him and Charles V. from Italy, and to give the preponderating power in it to the family of Medici.

Alfieri. It is absurd to argue with a Frenchman on any thing relating to either. The Spaniards have no palate, the Italians no scent, the French no ear. Garlic and grease and the most nauseous of pulse are the favorite cheer of the Spaniard; the olfactory nerves of the Italian endure any thing but odoriferous flowers and essences; and no sounds but soft ones offend the Frenchman.

Salomon. And yet several of the French prose writers are more harmonious than the best of ours.

Alfieri. In the construction of their sentences they have obtained from study what sensibility has denied them. Rousseau is an exception: he beside is the only musical composer that ever had a tolerable ear for prose. Music is both sunshine and irrigation to the mind; but when it occupies and covers it too long, it debilitates and corrupts it. Sometimes I have absorbed music so totally, that nothing was left of it in its own form: my ear detained none of the notes, none of the melody: they went into the heart immediately, mingled with the spirit, and lost themselves among the operations of the fancy, whose finest and most recondite springs they put simultaneously and vigorously in motion. Rousseau kept it subordinate; which must always be done with music as well as with musicians. He excels all the moderns in the harmony of his periods.

Salomon. I have heard it reported that you prefer Pascal.

Alfieri. Certainly, on the whole I consider him the most perfect of writers.

Salomon. Many other of the French theologians are said to be highly eloquent; but theology is without attraction for me, so that I am ignorant of their merit.

Alfieri. How deplorable that whatever is excellent in modern style should, with hardly any deduction, be displayed by fanaticism! I am little more interested by the contentions of Fénélon and Bossuet than I am by the *Cristo Bianco* and *Cristo Nero* of the Neapolitan rabble, — two processional idols, you must know, which are regularly carried home with broken heads.

Salomon. I dare not hazard a word upon these worthies. You, who had a Catholic father and whose blood is truly Christian, may ridicule them with impunity: the people who would laugh with you would stone me. Our incurable diarrhœa of words should not always make you take the other side of the road. Machiavelli is admirable for precision of style, no less than for acuteness of argument and depth of thought. Guicciardini, if his sentences were properly stopped, would be found in general both full and concise, whatever may be asserted to the contrary by the fastidious and inattentive.

Alfieri. I have often thought the same. As for Machiavelli, I would rather have written his *Discourses on the first Decade of Livius* (in which nothing is amiss but the title) than all the volumes, prose and poetry, of Voltaire. If the *Florentine History* is not so interesting as the more general one of Guicciardini, there is the same reason for it as there is that the *Batrachomyomachia* is not so interesting as the *Iliad.*

Salomon. Certainly no race of men upon earth ever was so unwarlike, so indifferent to national dignity and to personal honor, as the Florentines are now: yet in former days a certain pride, arising from a resemblance in their government to that of Athens, excited a vivifying desire of approximation where no danger or loss accompanied it; and Genius was no less confident of his security than of his power. Look from the window. That cottage on the declivity was Dante's: that square and large mansion, with a circular garden before it elevated artificially, was the first scene of Boccaccio's *Decameron.* A boy might stand at an equal distance between them, and break the windows of each with his sling. What idle fabricator of crazy systems will tell me that climate is the creator of genius? The climate of Austria is more regular and more temperate than ours, which I am inclined to believe is the most variable in the whole universe, subject, as you have perceived, to heavy fogs for two months in winter, and to a stifling heat, concentrated within the hills, for five more. Yet a single man of genius hath never appeared in the whole extent of Austria, an extent several thousand times greater than our city; and this very street has given birth to fifty.

Alfieri. Since the destruction of the republic, Florence has produced only one great man, Galileo, and abandoned him to every indignity that fanaticism and despotism could invent. Extraordinary men, like the stones that are formed in the higher regions of the air, fall upon the earth only to be broken and cast into the furnace. The precursor of Newton lived in the deserts of the moral world, drank water, and ate locusts and wild honey. It was fortunate that his head also was not lopped off: had a singer asked it, instead of a dancer, it would have been.

Salomon. In fact it was; for the fruits of it were shaken down and thrown away: he was forbidden to publish the most important of his discoveries, and the better part of his manuscripts was burned after his death.

Alfieri. Yes, signor Salomon, those things may rather be called our heads than this knob above the shoulder, of which (as matters stand) we are rather the porters than the proprietors, and which is really the joint concern of barber and dentist.

Salomon. Our thoughts, if they may not rest at home, may wander freely. Delighting in the remoter glories of my native city, I forget at times its humiliation and ignominy. A town so little that the voice of a cabbage-girl in the midst of it may be heard at the extremities, reared within three centuries a greater number of citizens illustrious for their genius than all the remainder of the continent (excepting her sister Athens) in six thousand years. My ignorance of the Greek forbids me to compare our Dante with Homer. The propriety and force of language and the harmony of verse in the glorious Grecian are quite lost to me. Dante had not only to compose a poem, but in great part a language. Fantastical as the plan of his poem is, and, I will add, uninteresting and uninviting; unimportant, mean, contemptible, as are nine-tenths of his characters and his details, and wearisome as is the scheme of his versification, — there are more thoughts highly poetical, there is more reflection, and the nobler properties of mind and intellect are brought into more intense action, not only than in the whole course of French poetry, but also in the whole of continental; nor do I think (I must here also speak with hesitation) that any one drama of Shakspeare contains so many. Smile as you will, signor Conte, what must I think of a city where Michel-Angelo, Frate Bartolomeo, Ghiberti (who formed them), Guicciardini, and Machiavelli were secondary men? And certainly such were they, if we compare them with Galileo and Boccaccio and Dante.

Alfieri. I smiled from pure delight, which I rarely do; for I take an interest deep and vital in such men, and in those who appreciate them rightly and praise them unreservedly. These are my fellow-citizens: I acknowledge no other; we are of the same tribe, of the same household; I bow to them as being older than myself, and I love them as being better.

Salomon. Let us hope that our Italy is not yet effete. Filangieri died but lately: what think you of him?

Alfieri. If it were possible that I could ever see his statue in a square at Constantinople, though I should be scourged for an idolater, I would kiss the pedestal. As this, however, is less likely than that I should suffer for writing satirically, and as criticism is less likely to mislead me than speculation, I will revert to our former subject.

Indignation and contempt may be expressed in other poems than such as are usually called satires. Filicaia, in his celebrated address to Italy, steers a middle course.

Salomon. True, he is neither indignant nor contemptuous; but the verses of Michel-Angelo would serve rather for an example, added to which they are much better.

Alfieri. In fact, the former part of Filicaia's is verbose and confused: let us analyze them: —

"Italia, Italia, o tu cui *die'* la sorte
Dono infelice di bellezza, onde hai
Funesta *dote* d' infiniti guai,
Che in fronte scritti *per gran doglia* porti."

Fate gives the *gift*, and this *gift* gives the dowry, which dowry consists of infinite *griefs*, and these griefs Italy carries written on her brow, through great *sorrow!* —

"Deh, fosti, tu *men* bella o *almen* più forte!"

Men and *almen* sound wretchedly: he might have written *oppur*.* There are those who would persuade us that verbal criticism is unfair, and that few poems can resist it. The truth of the latter assertion by no means establishes the former: all good criticism hath its foundation on verbal. Long dissertations are often denominated criticisms, without one analysis; instead of which it is thought enough to say: "There is nothing finer in our language — we can safely recommend — imbued with the true spirit — destined to immortality," &c.

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* There is another sonnet of Filicaia *to Italy*, remarkable for identity of sound, in four correspondent closes: —

"Dov' è, Italia, il tuo braccio? e a che ti *servi*
Tu dell altrui? Non è, se io scorgo il vero,
Di chi ti offende il difensor men fero. . .
Ambi nemici sono: ambi fur *servi.*
Così dunque l' onor, così con*servi'*
Gli avanzi tu del glorioso impero?
Così al valor, così al valor primiero
(Che a te fede giurò) la fede os*servi?*"

A perfect piece of criticism must exhibit *where* a work is good or bad; *why* it is good or bad; in what degree it is good or bad; must also demonstrate in what manner and to what extent the same ideas or reflections have come to others, and, if they be clothed in poetry, why, by an apparently slight variation, what in one author is mediocrity, in another is excellence. I have never seen a critic of Florence or Pisa or Milan or Bologna who did not commend and admire the sonnet of Cassiani on the rape of Proserpine, without a suspicion of its manifold and grave defects. Few sonnets are indeed so good; but if we examine it attentively, we shall discover its flaws and patches: —

> "Die' un alto strido, gittò i fiori, e volta
> All' improvisa *mano* che la *cinse*,
> Tutta in se *per la tema onde fù colta*
> La Siciliana vergine si strinse."

The *hand* is inadequate to embrace a *body; strinse*, which comes after, would have done better: and the last two verses tell only what the first two had told, and feebly; nothing can be more so than the *tema onde fù colta*.

> "Il nero dio la calda bocca involta
> D' ispido pelo a ingordo bacio spinse,
> E di stigia fuligin con la folta
> Barba l'eburnea gola *e il sen le tinse.*"

Does not this describe the devils of our carnival, rather than the majestic brother of Jupiter, at whose side upon asphodel and amaranth the sweet Persephone sits pensively contented, in that deep motionless quiet which mortals pity and which the gods enjoy; rather than him who, under the umbrage of Elysium, gazes at once upon all the beauties that on earth were separated, — Helena and Eriphyle, Polyxena and Hermione, Deidamia and Deianira, Leda and Omphale, Atalanta and Cydippe, Laodamia, with her arm round the neck of a fond youth whom she still seems afraid of losing, and, apart, the daughters of Niobe clinging to their parent?

Salomon. These images are better than satires; but continue, in preference to other thoughts or pursuits, the noble career you have entered. Be contented, signor Conte, with the glory of our first great dramatist, and neglect altogether any inferior one. Why vex and torment yourself about the French? They buzz and are troublesome while they are swarming; but the master will soon hive them. Is the whole nation worth the worst of your tragedies? All the present race of them, all the creatures in the world which excite your indignation, will lie in the grave, while young and old are clapping their hands or beating their bosoms at your *Bruto Primo.* Consider also that kings and emperors should in your estimation be but as grasshoppers and beetles: let them consume a few blades of your clover without molesting them, without bringing them to crawl on you and claw you. The difference between them and men of genius is almost as great as between men of genius and those higher intelligences who act in immediate subordination to the Almighty. Yes, I assert it, without flattery and without fear, the angels are not higher above mortals than you are above the proudest that trample on them.

Alfieri. I believe, sir, you were the first in commending my tragedies.

Salomon. He who first praises a good book becomingly is next in merit to the author.

Alfieri. As a writer and as a man I know my station: if I found in the world five equal to myself, I would walk out of it, not to be jostled.

I must now, signor Salomon, take my leave of you; for his Eminence my coachman and their Excellencies my horses are waiting.

XI. ROUSSEAU AND MALESHERBES.

Rousseau. I am ashamed, sir, of my countrymen: let my humiliation expiate their offence. I wish it had not been a minister of the gospel who received you with such inhospitality.

Malesherbes. Nothing can be more ardent and more cordial than the expressions with which you greet me, M. Rousseau, on my return from your lakes and mountains.

Rousseau. If the pastor took you for a courtier, I reverence him for his contemptuousness.

Malesherbes. Why so? Indeed you are in the wrong, my friend. No person has a right to treat another with contemptuousness unless he knows him to deserve it. When a courtier enters the house of a pastor in preference to the next, the pastor should partake in the sentiment that induced him, or at least not be offended to be preferred. A courtier is such at court: in the house of a clergyman he is not a courtier, but a guest. If to be a courtier is offensive, remember that we punish offences where they are committed, where they can be examined, where pleadings can be heard for and against the accused, and where nothing is admitted extraneous from the indictment, excepting what may be adduced in his behalf by witnesses to the general tenor of his character.

Rousseau. Is it really true that the man told you to mount the hay-loft if you wished a night's lodging?

Malesherbes. He did: a certain proof that he no more took me to be a courtier than I took him to be. I accepted his offer, and never slept so soundly. Moderate fatigue, the Alpine air, the blaze of a good fire (for I was admitted to it some moments), and a profusion of odoriferous hay, below which a cow was sleeping, subdued my senses, and protracted my slumbers beyond the usual hour.

Rousseau. You have no right, sir, to be the patron and remunerator of inhospitality. Three or four such men as you would corrupt all Switzerland, and prepare it for the fangs of France and Austria. Kings, like hyenas, will always fall upon dead carcasses, although their bellies are full, and although they are conscious that in the end they will tear one another to pieces over them. Why should you prepare their prey? Were your fire and effulgence given you for this? Why, in short, did you thank this churl? Why did you recommend him to his superiors for preferment on the next vacancy?

Malesherbes. I must adopt your opinion of his behavior in order to answer you satisfactorily. You suppose him inhospitable: what milder or more effectual mode of reproving him, than to make every dish at his table admonish him? If he did evil, have I no authority before me which commands me to render him good for it? Believe me, M. Rousseau, the execution of this command is always accompanied by the heart's applause, and opportunities of obedience are more frequent here than anywhere. Would not you exchange resentment for the contrary feeling, even if religion or duty said nothing about the matter? I am afraid the most philosophical of us are sometimes a little perverse, and will not be so happy as they might be, because the path is pointed out to them, and because he who points it out is wise and powerful. Obstinacy and jealousy, the worst parts of childhood and of manhood, have range enough for their ill humors without the heavens.

Rousseau. Sir, I perceive you are among my enemies. I did not think it; for, whatever may be my faults, I am totally free from suspicion.

Malesherbes. And do not think it now, I entreat you, my good friend.

Rousseau. Courts and society have corrupted the best heart in France, and have perverted the best intellect.

Malesherbes. They have done much evil then.

Rousseau. Answer me, and your own conscience: how could you choose to live among the perfidies of Paris and Versailles?

Malesherbes. Lawyers, and advocates in particular, must live there; philosophers need not. If every honest man thought it requisite to leave those cities, would the inhabitants be the better?

Rousseau. You have entered into intimacies with the members of various administrations, opposite in plans and sentiments, but alike hostile to you, and all of whom, if they could have kept your talents down, would have done it. Finding the thing impossible, they ceased to persecute, and would gladly tempt you under the semblance of friendship and esteem to supplicate for some office, that they might indicate to the world your unworthiness by refusing you: a proof, as you know, quite sufficient and self-evident.

Malesherbes. They will never tempt me to supplicate for any thing but justice, and that in behalf of others. I know nothing of parties. If I am acquainted with two persons of opposite sides in politics, I consider them as you consider a watchmaker and a cabinet-maker: one desires to rise by one way, the other by another. Administrations and systems of government would be quite indifferent to those very functionaries and their opponents, who appear the most zealous partisans, if their fortunes and consequence were not affixed to them. Several of these men seem consistent, and indeed are; the reason is, versatility would loosen and detach from them the public esteem and confidence —

Rousseau. By which their girandoles are lighted, their dinners served, their lacqueys liveried, and their opera-girls vie in benefit-nights. There is no State in Europe where the least wise have not governed the most wise. We find the light and foolish keeping up with the machinery of government easily and leisurely, just as we see butterflies keep up with carriages at full speed. This is owing in both cases to their levity and their position: the stronger and the more active are left behind. I am resolved to prove that farmers-general are the main causes of the defects in our music.

Malesherbes. Prove it, or any thing else, provided that the discussion does not irritate and torment you.

Rousseau. Truth is the object of philosophy.

Malesherbes. Not of philosophers: the display of ingenuity, for the most part, is and always has been it. I must here offer you an opinion of my own, which, if you think well of me, you will pardon, though you should disbelieve its solidity. My opinion then is, that truth is not reasonably the main and ultimate object of philosophy; but that philosophy should seek truth merely as the means of acquiring and of propagating happiness. Truths are simple; wisdom, which is formed by their apposition and application, is concrete: out of this, in its vast varieties, open to our wants and wishes, comes happiness. But the knowledge of all the truths ever yet discovered does not lead immediately to it, nor indeed will ever reach it, unless you make the more important of them bear upon your heart and intellect, and form, as it were, the blood that moves and nurtures them.

Rousseau. I never until now entertained a doubt that truth is the ultimate aim and object of philosophy: no writer has denied it, I think.

Malesherbes. Designedly none may: but when it is agreed that happiness is the chief good, it must also be agreed that the chief wisdom will pursue it; and I have already said, what your own experience cannot but have pointed out to you, that no truth, or series of truths, hypothetically, can communicate or attain it. Come, M. Rousseau, tell me candidly, do you derive no pleasure from a sense of superiority in genius and independence?

Rousseau. The highest, sir, from a consciousness of independence.

Malesherbes. *Ingenuous* is the epithet we affix to modesty; but modesty often makes men act otherwise than ingenuously: you, for example, now. You are angry at the servility of people, and disgusted at their obtuseness and indifference, on matters of most import to their welfare. If they were equal to you, this anger would cease; but the fire would break out somewhere else, on ground which appears at present sound and level. Voltaire, for instance, is less eloquent than you: but Voltaire is wittier than any man living. This quality—

Rousseau. Is the quality of a buffoon and a courtier. But the buffoon should have most of it, to support his higher dignity.

Malesherbes. Voltaire's is Attic.

Rousseau. If malignity is Attic. Petulance is not wit, although a few grains of wit may be found in petulance; quartz is not gold, although a few grains of gold may be found in quartz. Voltaire is a monkey in mischief, and a spaniel in obsequiousness. He declaims against the cruel and tyrannical; and he kisses the hands of adultresses who murder their husbands, and of robbers who decimate their gang.

Malesherbes. I will not discuss with you the character of the man, and only that part of the author's on which I spoke. There may be malignity in wit, there cannot be violence. You may irritate and disquiet with it; but it must be by means of a flower or a feather. Wit and humor stand on one side, irony and sarcasm on the other.

Rousseau. They stand very near.

Malesherbes. So do the Elysian fields and Tartarus.

Rousseau. Pray, go on: teach me to stand quiet in my stall, while my masters and managers pass by.

Malesherbes. Well then, — Pascal argues as closely and methodically; Bossuet is as scientific in the structure of his sentences; Demosthenes, many think, has equal fire, vigor, dexterity: equal selection of topics and equal temperance in treating them, immeasurably as he falls short of you in appeals to the sensibility, and in every thing which by way of excellence we usually call genius.

Rousseau. Sir, I see no resemblance between a pleader at the bar, or a haranguer of the populace, and me.

Malesherbes. Certainly his questions are occasional: but one great question hangs in the centre, and high above the rest; and this is, whether the Mother of liberty and civilization shall exist, or whether she shall be extinguished in the bosom of her family. As we often apply to Eloquence and her parts the terms we apply to Architecture and hers, let me do it also, and remark that nothing can be more simple, solid, and symmetrical, nothing more frugal in decoration or more appropriate in distribution, than the apartments of Demosthenes. Yours excel them in space and altitude; your ornaments are equally chaste and beautiful, with more variety and invention, more airiness and light. But why, among the Loves and Graces, does Apollo flay Marsyas? — and why may not the tiara still cover the ears of Midas? Cannot you, who detest kings and courtiers, keep away from them? If I must be with them, let me be in good humor and good spirits. If I will tread upon a Persian carpet, let it at least be in clean shoes.

As the raciest wine makes the sharpest vinegar, so the richest fancies turn the most readily to acrimony. Keep yours, my dear M. Rousseau, from the exposure and heats that generate it. Be contented; enjoy your fine imagination; and do not throw your salad out of window, nor shove your cat off your knee, on hearing it said that Shakspeare has a finer, or that a minister is of opinion that you know more of music than of state. My friend! the quarrels of ingenious men are generally far less reasonable and just, less placable and moderate, than those of the stupid and ignorant. We ought to blush at this: and we should blush yet more deeply if we bring them in as parties to our differences. Let us conquer by kindness; which we cannot do easily or well without communication. Our antipathies ought to be against the vices of men, and not against their opinions. If their opinions are widely different from ours, their vices ought to render them more dissimilar to us. Yet the opinions instigate us to hostility; the vices are snatched at with avidity, as rich materials to adorn our triumph.

Rousseau. This is sophistry; and at best is applicable only to the malicious. At a moment when truth is penetrating the castle of the powerful, and when freedom looks into the window of the poor, there are writers who would draw them back and confine them to their own libraries and theatres.

Malesherbes. Whether they proceed from the shelf or from the stage, generous sentiments are prevalent among us; and the steps both of truth and freedom are not the less rapid or the less firm because they advance in silence. Montesquieu has rendered them greater and more lasting service, than the fiercest anabaptist in Munster.

Rousseau. Many read him, some are pleased with him, few are instructed by him, none are guided. His *Lettres Persanes* are light and lively. His *Temple de Guide* is Parisian from the steps to the roof; there is but little imagination in it, and no warmth. There is more of fancy in his *Esprit des Lois*, of which the title-page would be much correcter with only the first word than with all three. He twitches me by the coat, turns me round, and is gone.

Malesherbes. Concise he certainly is, but he also is acute.

Rousseau. How far does his acuteness penetrate? A pin can pierce no deeper than to its head. He would persuade men that, if patriotism is the growth of republics, honor is the growth of monarchies. I would say it without offence, but say it I will, that honor is feeble and almost extinct in every ancient kingdom. In Spain it flourished more vigorously than in any other: pray, how much is left there? And what addition was made to it when the Bourbon crossed the Bidassoa? One vile family is sufficient to debase a whole nation. Voltaire, perhaps as honest and certainly as clear-sighted a man as any about the Tuileries, called Louis XV. *Titus.*

Is this honor? If it be, pray show me the distinction between that quality and truth. As I cannot think a liar honorable, I cannot think a lie honor. Gentlemen at court would rather give their lives than be *called* what they would scarcely give a *denier* not to *be*. Readiness to display courage is not honor, though it is what Montesquieu mistakes for it. Surely he might have praised his country for something better than this fantastic foolery, which, like hair-powder, requires a mask to be worn by those who put it on. He might have said, justly and proudly, that while others cling to a city, to a faction, to a family, the French in all their fortunes cling to France.

Malesherbes. Gratify me, I entreat you, by giving me your idea of honor.

Rousseau. The image stands before me, substantially and vigorously alive. Justice, generosity, delicacy, are the three Graces that formed his mind. Propriety of speech, clearness, firmness —

Malesherbes. Repress this enthusiasm. If you are known to have made me blush, you ruin me for ever in my profession.

Rousseau. Look, then, across the narrow sea. When Edward the Black Prince made your king his prisoner, he reverenced his age, his station, his misfortunes ; attending him, serving him, consoling him, like a son. Many of your countrymen who were then living lived to see the tide of victory turn, and the conquerors led into captivity. Talbot, whose name alone held provinces back from rebellion, was betrayed and taken, and loaded with indignities.

Malesherbes. Attribute it to the times. The English were as cruel to fallen valor in the person of Jeanne d'Arc.

Rousseau. There neither the genius of the nation nor the spirit of the times is reproachable, but the genius and spirit of fanaticism, which is violent and blind in all alike. Jeanne d'Arc was believed to be a sorceress, and was condemned to death for it by the ecclesiastical judges of each nation. Nothing but the full belief of the English, that she was under the guidance of an invisible and evil power, would have turned to flight those Saxo-Normans who never yielded to the Franco-Gauls when there were only three against one ; no, not once in the incessant contest during three hundred years, which ended in the utter subjugation of your country. As the French acknowledged her to be the inspired of God, they fancied there was no danger in following her: as the English thought her instigated by the Devil, they felt the insufficiency of human force in opposing her. Wherever she was not, the field was covered with French bodies, as before; wherever she was, it was covered with English, as it never had been until then. Had Jeanne d'Arc been born in England and fought for England, the people at this hour, although no longer slaves to idolatry, would almost worship her: every year would her festival be kept in every village of the land. But in France not a hymn is chanted to her, not a curl of incense is wafted, not a taper is lighted, not a daisy, not a rush, is strewn upon the ground throughout the whole kingdom she rescued. Instead of which, a shirt-airer to a libidinous king,—a ribald poet, a piebald of tragedy and comedy, a contemner alike of purity and of patriotism,—throws his filth against her mutilated features. Meanwhile an edifice is being erected in your city to the glory of Geneviève, which will exhaust the fortunes and almost the maledictions of the people.

Malesherbes. We certainly are not the most grateful of nations.

Rousseau. You must be, before you pretend to be the most honorable.

Malesherbes. I hope our gratitude in future will be excited by something better than the instruments of war. The nation is growing more civilized and humane: the young have never lapped blood.

Rousseau. I prefer the vices of the present king to the glories of his predecessor: I prefer a swine to a panther, and the outer side of the stye or grating to the inner.

Malesherbes. You, being a philanthropist, must rejoice that our reigning prince abstains from the field of battle.

Rousseau. Unless he did, he could not continue to give a thousand louis daily for the young maidens brought to him. A prodigal man is a thoughtless man; a prodigal prince is a thoughtless robber. Your country endures enough without war. But oppression and valor, like Voltaire's fever and quinquina, grow far apart.

Malesherbes. What! and are not our people brave?

Rousseau. I call those brave, and those only, who rise up simultaneously against the first indignity offered by their administrators, and who remove, without pause and without parley, trunk, root, and branch.

Malesherbes. As we cannot change at once the whole fabric of government, let us be attentive to the unsounder parts, and recommend the readiest and safest method of repairing them.

Rousseau. The minister would expel me from his antechamber, and order his valets to buffet me, if I offered him any proposal for the advantage of mankind.

Malesherbes. Call to him then from this room, where the valets are civiler. Nature has given you a speaking-trumpet, which neither storm can drown nor enemy can silence. If you esteem him, instruct him; if you despise him, do the same. Surely, you who have much benevolence would not despise any one willingly or unnecessarily. Contempt is for the incorrigible: now, where upon earth is he whom your genius, if rightly and temperately exerted, would not influence and correct?

I never was more flattered or honored than by your patience in listening to me. Consider me as an old woman who sits by the bedside in your infirmity, who brings you no savory viand, no exotic fruit, but a basin of whey or a basket of strawberries from your native hills; assures you that what oppressed you was a dream, occasioned by the wrong position in which you lay; opens the window, gives you fresh air, and entreats you to recollect the features of Nature, and to observe (which no man ever did so accurately) their beauty. In your politics you cut down a forest to make a toothpick, and cannot make even that out of it! Do not let us in jurisprudence be like critics in the classics, and change whatever can be changed, right or wrong. No statesman will take your advice. Supposing that any one is liberal in his sentiments and clear-sighted in his views, nevertheless love of power is jealous, and he would rejoice to see you fleeing from persecution or turning to meet it. The very men whom you would benefit will treat you worse. As the ministers of kings wish their masters to possess absolute power that the exercise of it may be delegated to them, which it naturally is from the violence and sloth alternate with despots as with wild beasts, and that they may apprehend no check or control from those who discover their misdemeanors, in like manner the people places more trust in favor than in fortune, and hopes to obtain by subserviency what it never might by election or by chance. Else in free governments, so some are called (for names once given are the last things lost), all minor offices and employments would be assigned by ballot. Each province or canton would present a list annually of such persons in it as are worthy to occupy the local administrations.

To avoid any allusion to the country in which we live, let us take England for example. Is it not absurd, iniquitous, and revolting, that the minister of a church in Yorkshire should be appointed by a lawyer in London, who never knew him, never saw him, never heard from a single one of the parishioners a recommendation of any kind? Is it not more reasonable that a justice of the peace should be chosen by those who have always been witnesses of his equity?

Rousseau. The English in former days insisted more firmly and urgently on improving their Constitution than they have ever done since. In the reign of Edward III. they claimed the nomination of the chancellor. And surely, if any nomination of any functionary is left to the people, it should be this. It is somewhat like the tribunitial power among the Romans, and is the only one which can intercede in a conciliatory way between the prince and people. Exclusively of this one office in the higher posts of government, the king should appoint his ministers, and should invest them with power and splendor; but those ministers should not appoint to any civil or religious place of trust or profit which the community could manifestly fill better. The greater part of offices and dignities should be conferred for a short and stated time, that all might hope to attain and strive to deserve them. Embassies in particular should never exceed one year in Europe, nor consulates two. To the latter office I assign this duration as the more difficult to fulfil properly, from requiring a knowledge of trade although a slight one, and because those who possess any such knowledge are inclined for the greater part to turn it to their own account, which a consul ought by no means to do. Frequent election of representatives and of civil officers in the subordinate employments would remove most causes of discontent in the people, and of instability in kingly power. Here is a lottery in which every one is sure of a prize, if not for himself, at least for somebody in his family or among his friends; and the ticket would be fairly paid for out of the taxes.

Malesherbes. So it appears to me. What other system can present so obviously to the great mass of the people the two principal piers and buttresses of government, tangible interest and reasonable hope? No danger of any kind can arise from it, no antipathies, no divisions, no imposture of demagogues, no caprice of despots. On the contrary, many and great advantages in places which at the first survey do not appear to border on it. At present, the best of the English juridical institutions, that of justices of the peace, is viewed with diffidence and distrust. Elected as they would be, and increased in number, the whole judicature, civil and criminal, might be confided to them, and their labors be not only not aggravated but diminished. Suppose them in four divisions to meet at four places in every county once in twenty days, and to possess the power of imposing a fine not exceeding two hundred francs on every cause implying oppression, and one not exceeding fifty on such as they should unanimously declare frivolous.

Rousseau. Few would become attorneys, and those from among the indigent.

Malesherbes. Almost the greatest evil that exists in the world, moral or physical, would be removed. A second appeal might be made in the following session; a third could only come before Parliament, and this alone by means of attorneys, the number of whom altogether would not exceed the number of coroners; for in England there are as many who cut their own throats as who would cut their own purses.

Rousseau. The famous *trial by jury* would cease: this would disgust the English.

Malesherbes. The number of justices would be much augmented: nearly all those who now are jurymen would enjoy this rank and dignity, and would be flattered by sitting on the same bench with the first gentlemen of the land.

Rousseau. What number would sit?

Malesherbes. Three or five in the first instance; five or seven in the second, — as the number of causes should permit.

Rousseau. The laws of England are extremely intricate and perplexed: such men would be puzzled.

Malesherbes. Such men having no interest in the perplexity, but on the contrary an interest in unravelling it, would see such laws corrected. Intricate as they are, questions on those which are the most so are usually referred by the judges themselves to private arbitration; of which my plan, I conceive, has all the advantages, united to those of open and free discussion among men of unperverted sense, and unbiassed by professional hopes and interests. The different courts of law in England cost about seventy millions of francs annually. On my system, the justices or judges would receive five-and-twenty francs daily; as the *special jurymen* do now, without any sense of shame or impropriety, however rich they may be: such being the established practice.

Rousseau. Seventy millions! seventy millions!

Malesherbes. There are attorneys and conveyancers in London who gain one hundred thousand francs a year, and advocates more. The chancellor —

Rousseau. The Celeno of these harpies —

Malesherbes. Nets above one million, and is greatly more than an archbishop in the church, scattering preferment in Cumberland and Cornwall from his bench at Westminster.

Rousseau. Absurdities and enormities are great in proportion to custom or insuetude. If we had lived from childhood with a *boa constrictor*, we should think it no more a monster than a canary-bird. The sum you mentioned, of seventy millions, is incredible.

Malesherbes. In this estimate the expense of letters by the post, and of journeys made by the parties, is not and cannot be included.

Rousseau. The whole machine of government, civil and religious, ought never to bear upon the people with a weight so oppressive. I do not add the national defence, which being principally naval is more costly, nor institutions for the promotion of the arts, which in a country like England ought to be liberal. But such an expenditure should nearly suffice for these also, in time of peace. Religion and law indeed should cost nothing: at present the one hangs property, the other quarters it. I am confounded at the profusion. I doubt whether the Romans expended so much in that year's war which dissolved the Carthaginian empire, and left them masters of the universe. What is certain, and what is better, it did not cost a tenth of it to colonize Pennsylvania, in whose forests the cradle of freedom is suspended, and where the eye of philanthropy, tired with tears and vigils, may wander and may rest. Your system, or rather your arrangement of one already established, pleases me. Ministers would only lose thereby that portion of their possessions which they give away to needy relatives, unworthy dependents, or the requisite supporters of their authority and power.

Malesherbes. On this plan, no such supporters would be necessary, no such dependents could exist, and no such relatives could be disappointed. Beside, the conflicts of their opponents must be periodical, weak, and irregular.

Rousseau. The craving for the rich carrion would be less keen; the zeal of opposition, as usual, would be measured by the stomach, whereon hope and overlooking have always a strong influence.

Malesherbes. My excellent friend, do not be offended with me for an ingenuous and frank confession: promise me your pardon.

Rousseau. You need none.

Malesherbes. Promise it, nevertheless.

Rousseau. You have said nothing, done nothing, which could in any way displease me.

Malesherbes. You grant me then a bill of indemnity for what I may have undertaken with a good intention since we have been together?

Rousseau. Willingly.

Malesherbes. I fell into your views, I walked along with you side by side, merely to occupy your mind, which I perceived was agitated.

Rousseau. In other words, to betray me. I had begun to imagine there was one man in the universe not my enemy.

Malesherbes. There are many, my dear M. Rousseau! yes, even in France and England; to say nothing of the remoter regions on each side of the equator, discovered and undiscovered. Be reasonable, be just.

Rousseau. I am the only man who is either. What would you say more?

Malesherbes. Perhaps I would even say less. You are fond of discoursing on the visionary and hypothetical: I usually avoid it.

Rousseau. Pray why, sir?

Malesherbes. Because it renders us more and more discontented with the condition in which Divine Providence hath placed us. We can hope to remove but a small portion of the evils that encompass us; there being many men to whom these are no evils at all, and such having the management of our concerns, and keeping us under them as tightly as the old man kept Sinbad.

Rousseau. I would teach them that what are evils to us are evils to them likewise, and heavier and more dangerous. The rash, impetuous rider, or (to adopt your allusion) the intolerably heavy one, is more liable to break his bones by a fall than the animal he has mounted. Sooner or later the cloud of tyranny bursts; and fortunes, piled up inordinately and immeasurably, not only are scattered and lost, but first overwhelm the occupier. We, like metallic blocks, are hardened by the repetition of the blows that flatten us, and every part of us touching the ground, we cannot fall lower: the hammerers, once fallen, are annihilated.

Your remarks, although inapplicable to the Continent, are applicable to England; and several of them, however they may be pecked, scratched, and kicked about by the pullets fattening in the darkened chambers of Parliament, are worthy of being weighed by the people, loath as may be ministers of state to employ the scales of Justice on any such occasion. But if the steadier hand refuses to perform its functions, the stronger may usurp them.

Malesherbes. Nothing more probable. Often the worst evil of bad government is not in its action but its counteraction.

Rousseau. Is it possible to doubt at what country you now are pointing? I cannot see then why you should have treated me like a driveller.

Malesherbes. How so, my friend, — how so?

Rousseau. To say the least, why you should believe me indifferent to the welfare of your country, to the dictates of humanity, to the improvement of the species.

Malesherbes. In compliance with your humor, to engage your fancy, to divert it awhile from Switzerland, by which you appear and partly on my account to be offended, I began with reflections upon England: I raised up another cloud in the region of them, light enough to be fantastic and diaphanous, and to catch some little irradiation from its western sun. Do not run after it farther; it has vanished already. Consider: the three great nations —

Rousseau. Pray, which are those?

Malesherbes. I cannot in conscience give the palm to the Hottentots, the Greenlanders, or the Hurons: I meant to designate those who united to empire the most social virtue and civil freedom. Athens, Rome, and England have received on the subject of government elaborate treatises from their greatest men. You have reasoned more dispassionately and profoundly on it than Plato has done, or probably than Cicero, led away as he often is by the authority of those who are inferior to himself: but do you excel Aristoteles in calm and patient investigation? Or, think you, are your reading and range of thought more extensive than Harrington's and Milton's? Yet what effect have the political works of these marvellous men produced upon the world? — what effect upon any one State, any one city, any one hamlet? A clerk in office, an accountant, a gauger of small-beer, a song-writer for a tavern dinner, produces more. He thrusts his rags into the hole whence the wind comes, and sleeps soundly. While you and I are talking about elevations and proportions, pillars and pilasters, architraves and friezes, the buildings we should repair are falling to the earth, and the materials for their restoration are in the quarry.

Rousseau. I could answer you: but my mind has certain moments of repose, or rather of oscillation, which I would not for the world disturb. Music, eloquence, friendship, bring and prolong them.

Malesherbes. Enjoy them, my dear friend, and convert them if possible to months and years. It is as much at your arbitration on what theme you shall meditate, as in what meadow you shall botanize; and you have as much at your option the choice of your thoughts, as of the keys in your harpsichord.

Rousseau. If this were true, who could be unhappy?

Malesherbes. Those of whom it is not true. Those who from want of practice cannot manage their thoughts, who have few to select from, and who, because of their sloth or of their weakness, do not roll away the heaviest from before them.

XII. JOSEPH SCALIGER AND MONTAIGNE.

Montaigne. What could have brought you, M. de l'Escale, to visit the old man of the mountain, other than a good heart? Oh how delighted and charmed I am to hear you speak such excellent Gascon.* You rise early, I see: you must have risen with the sun, to be here at this hour; it is a stout half-hour's walk from the brook. I have capital white wine, and the best cheese in Auvergne. You saw the goats and the two cows before the castle.

Pierre, thou hast done well: set it upon the table, and tell Master Matthew to split a couple of chickens and broil them, and to pepper but one. Do you like pepper, M. de l'Escale?

Scaliger. Not much.

Montaigne. Hold hard! let the pepper alone: I hate it. Tell him to broil plenty of ham; only two slices at a time, upon his salvation.

Scaliger. This, I perceive, is the antechamber to your library: here are your every-day books.

Montaigne. Faith! I have no other. These are plenty, methinks; is not that your opinion?

Scaliger. You have great resources within yourself, and therefore can do with fewer.

Montaigne. Why, how many now do you think here may be?

Scaliger. I did not believe at first that there could be above fourscore.

Montaigne. Well! are fourscore few? — are we talking of peas and beans?

Scaliger. I and my father (put together) have written well-nigh as many.

Montaigne. Ah! to write them is quite another thing: but one reads books without a spur, or even a pat from our Lady Vanity. How do you like my wine? — it comes from the little knoll yonder: you cannot see the vines, those chestnut-trees are between.

Scaliger. The wine is excellent; light, odoriferous, with a smartness like a sharp child's prattle.

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* "Ma mère était fort éloquente en Gascon." — *Scaligerana*, p. 232.

Montaigne. It never goes to the head, nor pulls the nerves, which many do as if they were guitar-strings. I drink a couple of bottles a-day, winter and summer, and never am the worse for it. You gentlemen of the Agennois have better in your province, and indeed the very best under the sun. I do not wonder that the Parliament of Bordeaux should be jealous of their privileges, and call it Bordeaux. Now, if you prefer your own country wine, only say it: I have several bottles in my cellar, with corks as long as rapiers, and as polished. I do not know, M. de l'Escale, whether you are particular in these matters: not quite, I should imagine, so great a judge in them as in others?

Scaliger. I know three things, — wine, poetry, and the world.*

Montaigne. You know one too many, then. I hardly know whether I know any thing about poetry; for I like Clem Marot better than Ronsard. Ronsard is so plaguily stiff and stately, where there is no occasion for it; I verily do think the man must have slept with his wife in a cuirass.

Scaliger. He had no wife: he was an *abbé* at Tours.

Montaigne. True, true; being an abbé he could never have one, and never want one; particularly at Tours, where the women profess an especial calling and most devotional turn for the religious.

Scaliger. It pleases me greatly that you like Marot. His version of the *Psalms* is lately set to music, and added to the *New Testament*, of Geneva.

Montaigne. It is putting a slice of honeycomb into a barrel of vinegar, which will never grow the sweeter for it.

Scaliger. Surely, you do not think in this fashion of the *New Testament!*

Montaigne. Who supposes it? Whatever is mild and kindly is there. But Jack Calvin has thrown bird-lime and vitriol upon it, and whoever but touches the cover dirties his fingers or burns them.

Scaliger. Calvin is a very great man, I do assure you, M. de Montaigne.

Montaigne. I do not like your very great men who beckon me to them, call me their begotten, their dear child, and their entrails; and, if I happen to say on any occasion, "I beg leave, sir, to dissent a little from you," stamp and cry, "The devil you do!" and whistle to the executioner.

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* "Je me connais en trois choses, *non in aliis, in vino, poesi, et juger des personnes.*" — *Scaligerana,* p. 232.

Scaliger. You exaggerate, my worthy friend!

Montaigne. Exaggerate do I, M. de l'Escale? What was it he did the other day to the poor devil there with an odd name? — Melancthon, I think it is.

Scaliger. I do not know: I have received no intelligence of late from Geneva.

Montaigne. It was but last night that our curate rode over from Lyons (he made two days of it, as you may suppose) and supped with me. He told me that Jack had got his old friend hanged and burned. I could not join him in the joke, for I find none such in the *New Testament*, on which he would have founded it; and, if it is one, it is not in my manner or to my taste.

Scaliger. I cannot well believe the report, my dear sir. He was rather urgent, indeed, on the combustion of the heretic Michael Servetus some years past.

Montaigne. A thousand to one, my spiritual guide mistook the name. He has heard of both, I warrant him, and thinks in his conscience that either is as good a roast as the other.

Scaliger. Theologians are proud and intolerant, and truly the farthest of all men from theology, if theology means the rational sense of religion, or indeed has any thing to do with it in any way. Melancthon was the very best of the reformers; quiet, sedate, charitable, intrepid, firm in friendship, ardent in faith, acute in argument, and profound in learning.

Montaigne. Who cares about his argumentation or his learning, if he was the rest?

Scaliger. I hope you will suspend your judgment on this affair, until you receive some more certain and positive information.

Montaigne. I can believe it of the Sieur Calvin.

Scaliger. I cannot. John Calvin is a grave man, orderly and reasonable.

Montaigne. In my opinion he has not the order nor the reason of my cook. Mat never took a man for a sucking-pig, cleaning and scraping and buttering and roasting him;

nor ever twitched God by the sleeve and swore he should not have his own way.

Scaliger. M. de Montaigne, have you ever studied the doctrine of predestination?

Montaigne. I should not understand it, if I had; and I would not break through an old fence merely to get into a cavern. I would not give a fig or a fig-leaf to know the truth of it, as far as any man can teach it me. Would it make me honester or happier, or, in other things, wiser?

Scaliger. I do not know whether it would materially.

Montaigne. I should be an egregious fool then to care about it. Our disputes on controverted points have filled the country with missionaries and cut-throats. Both parties have shown a disposition to turn this comfortable old house of mine into a fortress. If I had inclined to either, the other would have done it. Come walk about it with me; after a ride, you can do nothing better to take off fatigue.

Scaliger. A most spacious kitchen!

Montaigne. Look up!

Scaliger. You have twenty or more flitches of bacon hanging there.

Montaigne. And if I had been a doctor or a captain, I should have had a cobweb and predestination in the place of them. Your soldiers of the *religion* on the one side, and of the *good old faith* on the other, would not have left unto me safe and sound even that good old woman there.

Scaliger. Oh yes they would, I hope.

Old Woman. Why dost giggle, Mat? What should he know about the business? He speaks mighty bad French, and is as spiteful as the devil. Praised be God, we have a kind master, who thinks about us, and feels for us.

Scaliger. Upon my word, M. de Montaigne, this gallery is an interesting one.

Montaigne. I can show you nothing but my house and my dairy. We have no chase in the month of May, you know, — unless you would like to bait the badger in the stable. This is rare sport in rainy days.

Scaliger. Are you in earnest, M. de Montaigne?

Montaigne. No, no, no, I cannot afford to worry him outright: only a little for pastime, — a morning's merriment for the dogs and wenches.

Scaliger. You really are then of so happy a temperament that, at your time of life, you can be amused by baiting a badger!

Montaigne. Why not? Your father, a wiser and graver and older man than I am, was amused by baiting a professor or critic. I have not a dog in the kennel that would treat the badger worse than brave Julius treated Cardan and Erasmus, and some dozens more. We are all childish, old as well as young; and our very last tooth would fain stick, M. de l'Escale, in some tender place of a neighbor. Boys laugh at a person who falls in the dirt; men laugh rather when they make him fall, and most when the dirt is of their own laying.

Is not the gallery rather cold, after the kitchen? We must go through it to get into the court where I keep my tame rabbits; the stable is hard by: come along, come along.

Scaliger. Permit me to look a little at those banners. Some of them are old indeed.

Montaigne. Upon my word, I blush to think I never took notice how they are tattered. I have no fewer than three women in the house, and in a summer's evening, only two hours long, the worst of these rags might have been darned across.

Scaliger. You would not have done it surely!

Montaigne. I am not over-thrifty: the women might have been better employed. It is as well as it is then; ay?

Scaliger. I think so.

Montaigne. So be it.

Scaliger. They remind me of my own family, we being descended from the great Cane della Scala, Prince of Verona, and from the House of Hapsburg,* as you must have heard from my father.

Montaigne. What signifies it to the world whether the great Cane was tied to his grandmother or not? As for the House of Hapsburg, if you could put together as many such houses as would make up a city larger than Cairo, they would not be worth his study, or a sheet of paper on the table of it.

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* "Descendimus ex filiâ Comitis Hapsburgensis." — *Scaligerana*, p. 231.

XIII. BOCCACCIO AND PETRARCA.

Boccaccio. Remaining among us, I doubt not that you would soon receive the same distinctions in your native country as others have conferred upon you: indeed, in confidence I may promise it. For greatly are the Florentines ashamed that the most elegant of their writers and the most independent of their citizens lives in exile, by the injustice he had suffered in the detriment done to his property, through the intemperate administration of their laws.

Petrarca. Let them recall me soon and honorably: then perhaps I may assist them to remove their ignominy, which I carry about with me wherever I go, and which is pointed out by my exotic laurel.

Boccaccio. There is, and ever will be, in all countries and under all governments, an ostracism for their greatest men.

Petrarca. At present we will talk no more about it. To-morrow I pursue my journey toward Padua, where I am expected; where some few value and esteem me, honest and learned and ingenious men; although neither those Transpadane regions, nor whatever extends beyond them, have yet produced an equal to Boccaccio.

Boccaccio. Then, in the name of friendship, do not go thither! — form such rather from your fellow citizens. I love my equals heartily; and shall love them the better when I see them raised up here, from our own mother earth, by you.

Petrarca. Let us continue our walk.

Boccaccio. If you have been delighted (and you say you have been) at seeing again, after so long an absence, the house and garden wherein I have placed the relaters of my stories, as reported in the *Decameron*, come a little way further up the ascent, and we will pass through the vineyard on the west of the villa. You will see presently another on the right, lying in its warm little garden close to the roadside, the scene lately of somewhat that would have looked well, as illustration, in the midst of your Latin reflections. It shows us that people the most serious and determined may act at last contrariwise to the line of conduct they have laid down.

Petrarca. Relate it to me, Messer Giovanni; for you are able to give reality the merits and charms of fiction, just as easily as you give fiction the semblance, the stature, and the movement of reality.

Boccaccio. I must here forego such powers, if in good truth I possess them.

Petrarca. This long green alley, defended by box and cypresses, is very pleasant. The smell of box, although not sweet, is more agreeable to me than many that are; I cannot say from what resuscitation of early and tender feeling. The cypress too seems to strengthen the nerves of the brain. Indeed, I delight in the odor of most trees and plants.

Will not that dog hurt us? — he comes closer.

Boccaccio. Dog! thou hast the colors of a magpie and the tongue of one; prythee be quiet: art thou not ashamed?

Petrarca. Verily he trots off, comforting his angry belly with his plenteous tail, flattened and bestrewn under it. He looks back, going on, and puffs out his upper lip without a bark.

Boccaccio. These creatures are more accessible to temperate and just rebuke than the creatures of our species, usually angry with less reason, and from no sense, as dogs are, of duty. Look into that white arcade! Surely it was white the other day; and now I perceive it is still so: the setting sun tinges it with yellow.

Petrarca. The house has nothing of either the rustic or the magnificent about it; nothing quite regular, nothing much varied. If there is any thing at all affecting, as I fear there is, in the story you are about to tell me, I could wish the edifice itself bore externally some little of the interesting that I might hereafter turn my mind toward it, looking out of the catastrophe, though not away from it. But I do not even find the peculiar and uncostly decoration of our Tuscan villas: the central turret, round which the kite perpetually circles in search of pigeons or smaller prey, borne onward, like the Flemish skater, by effortless will in motionless progression. The view of Fiesole must be lovely from that window; but I fancy to myself it loses the cascade under the single high arch of the Mugnone.

Boccaccio. I think so. In this villa, — come rather further off: the inhabitants of it may hear us, if they should happen to be in the arbor, as most people are at the present hour of day, — in this villa, Messer Francesco, lives Monna Tita Monalda, who tenderly loved Amadeo degli Oricellari. She however was reserved and coy; and Father Pietro de' Pucci, an enemy to the family of Amadeo, told her never more to think of him, for that, just before he knew her, he had thrown his arm round the neck of Nunciata Righi, his mother's maid, calling her most immodestly a sweet creature, and of a whiteness that marble would split with envy at.

Monna Tita trembled and turned pale. "Father, is the girl really so very fair?" said she anxiously.

"Madonna," replied the father, "after confession she is not much amiss: white she is, with a certain tint of pink not belonging to her, but coming over her as through the wing of an angel pleased at the holy function; and her breath is such, the very ear smells it: poor, innocent, sinful soul! Hei! The wretch, Amadeo, would have endangered her salvation."

"She must be a wicked girl to let him," said Monna Tita. "A young man of good parentage and education would not dare to do such a thing, of his own accord. I will see him no more however. But it was before he knew me: and it may not be true. I cannot think any young woman would let a young man do so, even in the last hour before Lent. Now in what month was it supposed to be?"

"Supposed to be!" cried the father indignantly: "in June; I say in June."

"Oh! that now is quite impossible: for on the second of July, forty-one days from this, and at this very hour of it, he swore to me eternal love and constancy. I will inquire of him whether it is true: I will charge him with it."

She did. Amadeo confessed his fault, and, thinking it a venial one, would have taken and kissed her hand as he asked forgiveness.

Petrarca. Children! children! I will go into the house, and if their relatives, as I suppose, have approved of the marriage, I will endeavor to persuade the young lady that a fault like this, on the repentance of her lover, is not unpardonable. But first, is Amadeo a young man of loose habits?

Boccaccio. Less than our others: in fact, I never heard of any deviation, excepting this.

Petrarca. Come then with me.

Boccaccio. Wait a little.

Petrarca. I hope the modest Tita, after a trial, will not be too severe with him.

Boccaccio. Severity is far from her nature; but, such is her purity and innocence, she shed many and bitter tears at his confession, and declared her unalterable determination of taking the veil among the nuns of Fiesole. Amadeo fell at her feet, and wept upon them. She pushed him from her gently, and told him she would still love him, if he would follow her example, leave the world, and become a friar of San Marco. Amadeo was speechless; and, if he had not been so, he never would have made a promise he intended to violate. She retired from him: after a time he arose, less wounded than benumbed by the sharp uncovered stones in the garden walk; and, as a man who fears to fall from a precipice goes farther from it than is necessary, so did Amadeo shun the quarter where the gate is, and, oppressed by his agony and despair, throw his arms across the sun-dial and rest his brow upon it, hot as it must have been on a cloudless day in August. When the evening was about to close, he was aroused by the cries of rooks over-head; they flew toward Florence, and beyond: he too went back into the city.

Tita fell sick from her inquietude. Every morning ere sunrise did Amadeo return; but could hear only from the laborers in the field that Monna Tita was ill, because she had promised to take the veil and had not taken it, knowing, as she must do, that the heavenly bridegroom is a bridegroom never to be trifled with, let the spouse be young and beautiful as she may be. Amadeo had often conversed with the peasant of the farm, who much pitied so worthy and loving a gentleman; and, finding him one evening fixing some thick and high stakes in the ground, offered to help him. After due thanks, "It is time," said the peasant, "to rebuild the hovel and watch the grapes."

He went into the stable, collected the old pillars of his autumnal observatory, drove them into the ground, and threw the matting over them.

"This is my house," cried he. "Could I never, in my stupidity, think about rebuilding it before? Bring me another mat or two: I will sleep here to-night, to-morrow night, every night, all autumn, all winter."

He slept there, and was consoled at last by hearing that Monna Tita was out of danger, and recovering from her illness by spiritual means. His heart grew lighter day after day. Every evening did he observe the rooks, in the same order, pass along the same track in the heavens, just over San Marco: and it now occurred to him, after three weeks indeed, that Monna Tita had perhaps some strange idea, in choosing his monastery, not unconnected with the passage of these birds. He grew calmer upon it, until he asked himself whether he might hope. In the midst of this half-meditation, half-dream, his whole frame was shaken by the voices, however low and gentle, of two monks coming from the villa and approaching him. He would have concealed himself under this bank whereon we are standing; but they saw him and called him by name. He now perceived that the younger of them was Guiberto Oddi, with whom he had been at school about six or seven years ago, and who admired him for his courage and frankness when he was almost a child.

"Do not let us mortify poor Amadeo," said Guiberto to his companion. "Return to the road: I will speak a few words to him, and engage him (I trust) to comply with reason and yield to necessity." The elder monk, who saw he should have to climb the hill again, assented to the proposal, and went into the road. After the first embraces and few words, "Amadeo! Amadeo!" said Guiberto, "it was love that made me a friar; let any thing else make you one."

"Kind heart!" replied Amadeo. "If death or religion, or hatred of me, deprives me of Tita Monalda, I will die, where she commanded me, in the cowl. It is you who prepare her then to throw away her life and mine!"

"Hold! Amadeo!" said Guiberto, "I officiate together with good Father Fontesecco, who invariably falls asleep amid our holy function."

Now, Messer Francesco, I must inform you that Father Fontesecco has the heart of a flower. It feels nothing, it wants nothing; it is pure and simple, and full of its own little light. Innocent as a child, as an angel, nothing ever troubled him but how to devise what he should confess. A confession costs him more trouble to invent than any Giornata in my *Decameron* cost me. He was once overheard to say on this occasion, "God forgive me in his infinite mercy, for making it appear that I am a little worse than he has chosen I should be!" He is temperate; for he never drinks more than exactly half the wine and water set before him. In fact, he drinks the wine and leaves the water, saying, "We have the same water up at San Domenico; we send it hither: it would be uncivil to take back our own gift, and still more to leave a suspicion that we thought other people's wine poor beverage." Being afflicted by the gravel, the physician of his convent advised him, as he never was fond of wine, to leave it off entirely; on which he said, "I know few things; but this I know well: in water there is often gravel, in wine never. It hath pleased God to afflict me, and even to go a little out of his way in order to do it, for the greater warning to other sinners. I will drink wine, brother Anselmini, and help his work."

I have led you away from the younger monk.

"While Father Fontesecco is in the first stage of beatitude, chanting through his nose the benedicite, I will attempt," said Guiberto, "to comfort Monna Tita."

"Good, blessed Guiberto!" exclaimed Amadeo in a transport of gratitude, at which Guiberto smiled with his usual grace and suavity. "O Guiberto! Guiberto! my heart is breaking. Why should she want you to comfort her? — but — comfort her then!" and he covered his face within his hands.

"Remember," said Guiberto placidly, "her uncle is bedridden; her aunt never leaves him: the servants are old and sullen, and will stir for nobody. Finding her resolved, as they believe, to become a nun, they are little assiduous in their services. Humor her, if none else does, Amadeo; let her fancy that you intend to be a friar; and, for the present, walk not on these grounds."

"Are you true, or are you traitorous?" cried Amadeo, grasping his friend's hand most fiercely.

"Follow your own counsel, if you think mine insincere," said the young friar, not withdrawing his hand, but placing the other on Amadeo's. "Let me, however, advise you to conceal yourself; and I will direct Silvestrina to bring you such accounts of her mistress as may at least make you easy in regard to her health. Adieu."

Amadeo was now rather tranquil; more than he had ever been, not only since the displeasure of Monna Tita, but since the first sight of her. Profuse at all times in his gratitude to Silvestrina, whenever she brought him good news, news better than usual, he pressed her to his bosom. Silvestrina Pioppi is about fifteen, slender, fresh, intelligent, lively, good-humored, sensitive; and any one but Amadeo might call her very pretty.

Petrarca. Ah, Giovanni! here I find your heart obtaining the mastery over your vivid and volatile imagination. Well have you said, the maiden being really pretty, any one but Amadeo might think her so. On the banks of the Sorga there are beautiful maids; the woods and the rocks have a thousand times repeated it. I heard but one echo; I heard but one name: I would have fled from them for ever at another.

Boccaccio. Franceso, do not beat your breast just now: wait a little. Monna Tita would take the veil. The fatal certainty was announced to Amadeo by his true Guiberto, who had earnestly and repeatedly prayed her to consider the thing a few months longer.

"I will see her first! By all the saints of heaven I will see her!" cried the desperate Amadeo, and ran into the house, toward the still apartment of his beloved. Fortunately Guiberto was neither less active nor less strong than he, and overtaking him at the moment, drew him into the room opposite. "If you will be quiet and reasonable, there is yet a possibility left you," said Guiberto in his ear, although perhaps he did not think it. "But if you utter a voice or are seen by any one, you ruin the fame of her you love, and obstruct your own prospects for ever. It being known that you have not slept in Florence these several nights, it will be suspected by the malicious that you have slept in the villa with the connivance of Monna Tita. Compose yourself; answer nothing; rest where you are: do not add a worse imprudence to a very bad one. I promise you my assistance, my speedy return, and best counsel: you shall be released at daybreak." He ordered Silvestrina to supply the unfortunate youth with the cordials usually administered to the uncle, or with the rich old wine they were made of; and she performed the order with such promptitude and attention, that he was soon in some sort refreshed.

Petrarca. I pity him from my soul, poor young man!

Alas, we are none of us, by original sin, free from infirmities or from vices.

Boccaccio. If we could find a man exempt by nature from vices and infirmities, we should find one not worth knowing: he would also be void of tenderness and compassion. What allowances then could his best friends expect from him in their frailties? What help, consolation, and assistance in their misfortunes? We are in the midst of a workshop well stored with sharp instruments: we may do ill with many, unless we take heed; and good with all, if we will but learn how to employ them.

Petrarca. There is somewhat of reason in this. You strengthen me to proceed with you: I can bear the rest.

Boccaccio. Guiberto had taken leave of his friend, and had advanced a quarter of a mile, which (as you perceive) is nearly the whole way, on his return to the monastery, when he was overtaken by some peasants who were hastening homeward from Florence. The information he collected from them made him determine to retrace his steps. He entered the room again, and, from the intelligence he had just acquired, gave Amadeo the assurance that Monna Tita must delay her entrance into the convent; for that the abbess had that moment gone down the hill on her way toward Siena to venerate some holy relics, carrying with her three candles, each five feet long, to burn before them; which candles contained many particles of the myrrh presented at the nativity of our Saviour by the wise men of the East. Amadeo breathed freely, and was persuaded by Guiberto to take another cup of old wine, and to eat with him some cold roast kid, which had been offered him for *merenda*.* After the agitation of his mind a heavy sleep fell upon the lover, coming almost before Guiberto departed; so heavy indeed that Silvestrina was alarmed. It was her apartment; and she performed the honors of it as well as any lady in Florence could have done.

Petrarca. I easily believe it: the poor are more attentive than the rich, and the young are more compassionate than the old.

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* *Merenda* is luncheon, — *meridiana,* — eaten by the wealthier at the hour when the peasants dine.

Boccaccio. O Francesco! what inconsistent creatures are we!

Petrarca. True, indeed! I now foresee the end. He might have done worse.

Boccaccio. I think so.

Petrarca. He almost deserved it.

Boccaccio. I think that too.

Petrarca. Wretched mortals! our passions for ever lead us into this, or worse.

Boccaccio. Ay, truly; much worse generally.

Petrarca. The very twig on which the flowers grew lately scourges us to the bone in its maturity.

Boccaccio. Incredible will it be to you, and, by my faith, to me it was hardly credible. Certain however is it, that Guiberto on his return by sunrise found Amadeo in the arms of sleep.

Petrarca. Not at all, not at all incredible: the truest lover would have done the same, exhausted by suffering.

Boccaccio. He was truly in the arms of sleep; but, Francesco, there was another pair of arms about him, worth twenty such, divinity as he is. A loud burst of laughter from Guiberto did not arouse either of the parties; but Monna Tita heard it, and rushed into the room, tearing her hair, and invoking the saints of heaven against the perfidy of man. She seized Silvestrina by that arm which appeared the most offending: the girl opened her eyes, turned on her face, rolled out of bed, and threw herself at the feet of her mistress, shedding tears, and wiping them away with the only piece of linen about her. Monna Tita too shed tears. Amadeo still slept profoundly; a flush, almost of crimson, overspreading his cheeks. Monna Tita led away, after some pause, poor Silvestrina, and made her confess the whole. She then wept more and more, and made the girl confess it again, and explain her confession. "I cannot believe such wickedness," she cried: "he could not be so hardened. O sinful Silvestrina! how will you ever tell Father Doni one half, one quarter? He never can absolve you."

Petrarca. Giovanni, I am glad I did not enter the house; you were prudent in restraining me. I have no pity for the youth at all: never did one so deserve to lose a mistress.

Boccaccio. Say, rather, to gain a wife.

Petrarca. Absurdity! impossibility!

Boccaccio. He won her fairly; strangely, and on a strange table, as he played his game. Listen! that guitar is Monna Tita's. Listen! what a fine voice (do not you think it?) is Amadeo's.

Amadeo (*singing*).

Oh, I have err'd!
I laid my hand upon the nest
(Tita, I sigh to sing the rest)
Of the wrong bird.

Petrarca. She laughs too at it! Ah! Monna Tita was made by nature to live on this side of Fiesole.

XIV. CHAUCER, BOCCACCIO, AND PETRARCA.

Petrarca. You have kept your promise like an Englishman, Ser[*] Geoffreddo: welcome to Arezzo. This gentleman is Messer Giovanni Boccaccio, of whose unfinished *Decameron*, which I opened to you in manuscript, you expressed your admiration when we met at Florence in the spring.

Boccaccio. I was then at Certaldo, my native place, filling up my stories, and have only to regret that my acquaintance with one so friendly and partial to me has been formed so late.

How did Rome answer your expectations, sir?

Chaucer. I had passed through Pisa; of which city the Campo Santo, now nearly finished after half a century from its foundation, and the noble street along the Arno,[†] are incomparably more beautiful than any thing in Rome.

Petrarca. That is true. I have heard, however, some of your countrymen declare that Oxford is equal to Pisa, in the solidity, extent, and costliness of its structures.

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[*] *Ser* is commonly used by Boccaccio and others for *Messer*.

[†] The Corso in Rome is now much finer. P. Leopold dismantled the walls of Pisa, and demolished more than fifty towers and turrets. Every year castellated mansions are modernized in Italy.

Chaucer. Oxford is the most beautiful of our cities: it would be a very fine one if there were no houses in it.

Petrarca. How is that?

Chaucer. The lath-and-plaster white-washed houses look despicably mean under the colleges.

Boccaccio. Few see any thing in the same point of view. It would gratify me highly, if you would tell me with all the frankness of your character and your country, what struck you most in "*the capital of the world*," as the vilest slaves in it call their great open cloaca.

Chaucer. After the remains of antiquity, I know not whether any thing struck me more forcibly than the superiority of our English churches and monasteries.

Boccaccio. I do not wonder that yours should be richer and better built, although I never heard before that they are; for the money that is collected in Rome or elsewhere, by the pontiffs, is employed for the most part in the aggrandizement of their families. Messer Francesco, although he wears the habit of a churchman, speaks plainlier on these subjects than a simple secular, as I am, dares to do.

Petrarca. We may, however, I trust, prefer the beauty and variety of our scenery to that of most in the world. Tuscany is less diversified and, excepting the mountains above Camaldoli and Laverna, less sublime than many other parts of Italy; yet where does Nature smile with more contented gayety than in the vicinity of Florence? Great part of our sea-coast along the Mediterranean is uninteresting; yet it is beautiful in its whole extent from France to Massa. Afterward there is not a single point of attraction till you arrive at Terracina. The greater part of the way round the peninsula, from Terracina to Pesaro, has its changes of charms: thenceforward all is flat again.

Boccaccio. We cannot travel in the most picturesque and romantic regions of our Italy, from the deficiency of civilization in the people.

Chaucer. Yet, Messer Giovanni, I never journeyed so far through so enchanting a scenery as there is almost the whole of the way from Arezzo to Rome, particularly round Terni and Narni and Perugia.

Our master, Virgil, speaks of dreams that swarm upon the branches of one solitary elm. In this country, more than dreams swarm upon every spray and leaf; and every murmur of wood or water comes from and brings with it inspiration. Never shall I forget the hour when my whole soul was carried away from me by the cataract of Terni, and when all things existing were lost to me in its stupendous waters. The majestic woods that bowed their heads before it; the sun that was veiling his glory in mild translucent clouds over the furthest course of the river; the moon, that suspended her orb in the very centre of it, — seemed ministering Powers, themselves in undiminished admiration of the marvel they had been looking on through unnumbered ages. What are the works of man in comparison with this? What, indeed, are the other works of Nature?

Petrarca. Ser Giovanni! this, which appears too great even for Nature, was not too great for man. Our ancestors achieved it. Curius Dentatus, in his consulate, forbade the waters of the Velinus to inundate so beautiful a valley, and threw them down this precipice into the Nar. When the traces of all their other victories, all their other labors, shall have disappeared, this work of the earlier and the better Romans shall continue to perform its office, shall produce its full effect, and shall astonish the beholder as it astonished him at its first completion.

Chaucer. I was not forgetful that we heard the story from our guide, but I thought him a boaster; and now for the first time I learn that any great power hath been exerted for any great good. Roads were levelled for aggression, and vast edifices were constructed either for pride or policy, to commemorate some victory, to reward the Gods for giving it, or to keep them in the same temper. There is nothing of which men appear to have been in such perpetual apprehension, as the inconstancy of the deities they worship.

Many thanks, Ser Francesco, for reminding me of what the guide asserted, and for teaching me the truth. I thought the fall of the Velinus not only the work of Nature, but the most beautiful she had ever made on earth. My prevention, in regard to the country about Rome, was almost as great and almost as unjust to Nature, from what I had heard of it both at home and abroad. In the approach to the eternal city, she seems to have surrendered much of her wildness, and to have assumed all her stateliness and sedateness, all her awfulness and severity. The vast plain toward the sea abases the soul together with it; while the hills on the left, chiefly those of Tusculum and of Tiber, overshadow and almost overwhelm it with obscure remembrances, some of them descending from the heroic ages, others from an age more miraculous than the heroic, the Herculean infancy of immortal Rome. Soracte comes boldly forward, and stands alone. Round about, on every side, we behold an infinity of baronial castles, many moated and flanked with towers and bastions; many following the direction of the precipitous hills, of which they cover the whole summit. Tracts of land, where formerly stood entire nations, are now the property of some rude baron, descendant of a murderer too formidable for punishment, or of a robber too rich for it; and the ruins of cities, which had sunk in luxury when England was one wide forest, are carted off by a herd of slaves and buffaloes to patch up the crevices of a fort or dungeon.

Boccaccio. Messer Francesco groans upon this and wipes his brow.

Petrarca. Indeed I do.

Three years ago my fancy and hopes were inflamed by what I believed to be the proximity of regeneration. Cola Rienzi might have established good and equitable laws: even the Papacy, from hatred of the barons, would have countenanced the enaction of them, hoping at some future time to pervert and subjugate the people as before. The vanity of this tribune, who corresponded with kings and emperors, and found them pliable and ductile, was not only the ruin of himself and of the government he had founded, but threw down, beyond the chance of retrieving it, the Roman name.

Let us converse no more about it. I did my duty; yet our failure afflicts me, and will afflict me until my death. Jubilees, and other such mummeries, are deemed abundant compensation for lost dignity, lost power and empire, lost freedom and independence. We who had any hand in raising up our country from her abject state are looked on with jealousy by those wretches to whom cowardice and flight alone give the titles and rewards of loyalty; with sneers and scorn by those who share among themselves the emoluments of office; and, lest consolation be altogether wanting, with somewhat of well-meaning compassion, as weak misguided visionaries, by quiet good creatures who would have beslavered and adored us if we had succeeded.

The nation that loses her liberty is not aware of her misfortune at the time, any more than the patient is who receives a paralytic stroke. He who first tells either of them what has happened is repulsed as a simpleton or a churl.

Boccaccio. When Messer Francesco talks about liberty, he talks loud. Let us walk away from the green,* into the cathedral which the congregation is leaving.

Petrarca. Come, now, Giovanni, tell us some affecting story, suitable to the gloominess of the place.

Boccaccio. If Ser Geoffreddo felt in honest truth any pleasure at reading my *Decameron*, he owes me a tithe at least of the stories it contains; for I shall not be so courteous as to tell him that one of his invention is worth ten of mine, until I have had all his ten from him: if not now, another day.

Chaucer. Let life be spared to me, and I will carry the tithe in triumph through my country, much as may be shed of the heavier and riper grain by the conveyance and the handling of it. And I will attempt to show Englishmen what Italians are; how much deeper in thought, intenser in feeling, and richer in imagination, than ever formerly: and I will try whether we cannot raise poetry under our fogs, and merriment among our marshes. We must at first throw some litter about it, which those who come after us may remove.

Petrarca. Do not threaten, Ser Geoffreddo! Englishmen act.

Boccaccio. Messer Francesco is grown melancholy at the spectre of the tribune. Relate to us some amusing tale, either of court or war.

Chaucer. It would ill become me, signors, to refuse what I can offer; and truly I am loath to be silent, when a fair occasion is before me of adverting to those of my countrymen who fought in the battle of Cressy, as did one or two or more of the persons that are the subjects of my narrative.

Boccaccio. Enormous and horrible as was the slaughter of the French in that fight, and hateful as is war altogether to you and me, Francesco, I do expect from the countenance of Ser Geoffreddo, that he will rather make us merry than sad.

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* The cathedral of Arezzo stands on a green, in which are pleasant walks commanding an extensive view.

Chaucer. I hope I may, the story not wholly nor principally relating to the battle.

Sir Magnus Lucy is a knight of ample possessions and of no obscure family, in the shire of Warwick, one of our inland provinces. He was left in his childhood under the guardianship of a mother, who loved him more fondly than discreetly. Beside which disadvantage, there was always wanting in his family the nerve or fluid, or whatever else it may be, on which the intellectual powers are nourished and put in motion. The good Lady Joan would never let him enter the lists at jousts and tournaments, to which indeed he showed small inclination, nor would she encourage him to practise or learn any martial exercise. He was excused from the wars under the plea that he was subject to epilepsy ; somewhat of which fit or another had befallen him in his adolescence, from having eaten too freely of a cold swan, after dinner. To render him justice, he had given once an indication of courage. A farmer's son upon his estate, a few years younger than himself, had become a good player at quarter-staff, and was invited to Charlecote, the residence of the Lucys, to exhibit his address in this useful and manly sport. The lad was then about sixteen years old, or rather more ; and another of the same parish, and about the same standing, was appointed his antagonist. The sight animated Sir Magnus ; who, seeing the game over and both combatants out of breath, called out to Peter Crosby the conqueror, and declared his readiness to engage with him, on these conditions : First, that he should have a helmet on his head with a cushion over it, — both of which he sent for ere he made the proposal, and both of which were already brought to him, the one from a buck's horn in the hall, the other from his mother's chair in the parlor ; secondly, that his visor should be down ; thirdly, that Peter should never aim at his body or arms ; fourthly and lastly, for he would not be too particular, that, instead of a cudgel, he should use a bulrush, enwrapped in the under-coat he had taken off, lest any thing venomous should be sticking to it, as his mother said there might be, from the spittle or spawn of toads, evets, water-snakes, and adders.

Peter scraped back his right foot, leaned forward, and laid his hooked fingers on his brow, not without scratching it, — the multiform signification of humble compliance in our country. John Crosby, the father of Peter, was a merry, jocose old man, not a little propense to the mischievous. He had about him a powder of a sternutatory quality, whether in preparation for some trick among his boon companions, or useful in the catching of chub and bream, as many suspected, is indifferent to my story. This powder he inserted in the head of the bulrush, which he pretended to soften and to cleanse by rubbing, while he instructed his lad in the use and application of it. Peter learned the lesson so well, and delivered it so skilfully, that at the very first blow the powder went into the aperture of the visor, and not only operated on the nostrils, but equally on the two spherical, horny, fish-like eyes above it. Sir Magnus wailed aloud, dropped his cudgel, tore with great effort (for it was well fastened) the pillow from his helmet, and implored the attendants to embrace him, crying, "Oh Jesu! Jesu! I am in the agonies of death: receive my spirit!" John Crosby kicked the ankle of the farmer who sat next him on the turf, and whispered, "He must find it first."

The mischief was attributed to the light and downy particles of the bulrush, detached by the unlucky blow; and John, springing up when he had spoken the words, and seizing it from the hand of his son, laid it lustily about his shoulders until it fell in dust on every side, crying, "Scape-grace! scape-grace! born to break thy father's heart in splinters! Is it thus thou beginnest thy service to so brave and generous a master? Out of my sight!"

Never was the trick divulged by the friends of Peter until after his death, which happened lately at the battle of Cressy. While Peter was fighting for his king and country, Sir Magnus resolved to display his wealth and splendor in his native land. He had heard of princes and other great men travelling in disguise, and under names not belonging to them. This is easy of imitation: he resolved to try it; although at first a qualm of conscience came over him on the part of the Christian name which his godfathers and godmothers had given him, but which however was so distinguishing that he determined to lay it aside, first asking leave of three saints, paying three groats into the alms-box, saying twelve paternosters within the hour, and making the priest of the parish drunk at supper. He now gave it out by sound of horn that he should leave Charlecote, and travel *incognito* through several parts of England. For this purpose he locked up the liveries of his valets, and borrowed for them from his tenants the dress of yeomanry. Three grooms rode forward in buff habiliments, with three led horses well caparisoned. Before noon he reached a small town called Henley-in-Arden, as his host at the inn-door told him, adding, when the knight dismounted, that there were scholars who had argued in his hearing whether the name of Arden were derived from another forest so called in Germany, or from a puissant family which bore it, being earls of Warwick in the reign of Edward the Confessor. "It is the opinion of the Abbot of Tewkesbury, and likewise of my very good master, him of Evesham," said the host, "that the Saxon earls brought over the name with them from their own country, and gave it to the wilder part of their dominions in this of ours."

"No such family now," cried the knight. "We have driven them out, bag and baggage, long ago, being braver men than they were."

A thought however struck him that the vacant name might cover and befit him in this expedition; and he ordered his servants to call him Sir Nigel de Arden.

Continuing his march northward, he protested that nothing short of the Trent (if indeed that river were not a fabulous one) should stop him; nay, by the rood, not even the Trent itself, if there were any bridge over it strong enough to bear a horse caparisoned, or any ford which he could see a herd of oxen or a score of sheep fit for the butcher pass across. Early on the second morning he was nigh upon twenty miles from home, at a hamlet we call Bromwicham, where be two or three furnaces and sundry smiths, able to make a horse-shoe in time of need, allowing them drink and leisure. He commanded his steward to disburse unto the elder of them one penny of lawful coin, advising the cunning man to look well and soberly at his steed's hoofs, and at those of the other steeds in his company; which being done, and no repairs being necessary, Sir Magnus then proceeded to the vicinity of another hamlet called Sutton Colefield, in which country is a well-wooded and well-stocked chase, belonging to my dread master the Duke of Lancaster, who often taketh his sport therein. Here, unhappily for the knight, were the keepers of the said chase hunting the red and fallow deer. The horse of the worshipful knight, having a great affection for dogs, and inspirited by the prancing and neighing of his fellow-creatures about him, sprang forward, and relaxed not any great matter of his mettle before he reached the next forest of Cannock, where the buck that was pursued pierced the thickets and escaped his enemies. In the village of Cannock was the knight, at his extremity, fain to look for other farriery than that which is exercised by the craft in Bromwicham, and upon other flesh than horseflesh, and about parts less horny than hoofs, however hardened be the same parts by untoward bumps and contusions. This farriery was applied by a skilful and discreet leech, while Sir Magnus opened his missal on his bed in the posture of devotion, and while a priest, who had been called in to comfort him, was looking for the penitential psalms of good king David, — the only service (he assured Sir Magnus) that had any effect in the removal or alleviation of such sufferings.

When the host at Cannock heard the name of his guest, "'Sblood!" cried he to his son, "ride over, Emanuel, to Longcroft, and inform the worshipful youths, Humphrey and Henry, that one of their kinsmen is come over from the other side of Warwickshire to visit them, and has lost his way in the forest through a love of sport."

On his road into Rugeley, Emanuel met them together, and told them his errand. They had heard the horn as they were riding out, had joined the hunt, and were now returning home. Indignant at first that any one should take the name of their family, they went on asking more and more questions, and their anger abated as their curiosity increased. Having an abundance of good-humor and of joviality in their nature, they agreed to act courteously, and turn the adventure into glee and joyousness. So they went back with Emanuel to his father's at Cannock, and were received by the townspeople with much deference and respect. The attendants of Sir Magnus observed it, and were earnest to see in what manner the adventure would terminate.

"Go," said Humphrey, "and tell your master Sir Nigel that his kinsmen are come to pay their duty to him." The clergyman who had been reading the penitential psalms, and had afterwards said Mass, opened the chamber-door for them, and conducted them to Sir Magnus. They began their compliments by telling him that, although the house at Longcroft was unworthy of their kinsman's reception, in the absence of their father, — when they were interrupted by the knight, who cried aloud in a clear quaver, "Young gentlemen! I have no relative in these parts: I come from the very end of Warwickshire. Reverend sir priest! I do protest and vow I have no cognizance of these two young gentlemen."

As he spoke, the sweat hung upon his brow, the cause of which neither the brothers nor the priest could interpret; but it really was lest they should have come to dine with him, and perhaps have moreover some retinue in the yard. Disclaimed so unceremoniously, Humphrey de Arden opened a leathern purse, and carefully took out his father's letter. Whereat the alarm of Sir Magnus increased beyond measure, from the uncertainty of its contents, and from the certainty of being discovered as the usurper of a noble name. His terrors however were groundless; the letter was this: —

"Son Humphrey, — I grieve that the valet who promised me those three strong geldings, and took moneys thereupon, hath mortally disappointed me; for verily we have hard work here, being one against seven or eight;* and, if matters go on in this guise, I must e'en fight afoot ere it be long: they have killed among them my brave old Black Jack, who had often winnowed them with his broken wind, which was not broken till they broke it. The drunken fat rogue that now fails me would rather hunt on Colefield or (if he dare come so near to you) on Cannock, than lead the three good steeds in a halter up Yoxall Lane. Whenever ye find him, stand within law with him, and use whit-leather rather than Needwood holly, which might provoke the judge; and take the three hale nags, coming hither with them yourselves, and paying him forthwith three angels, due unto him on the feast of Saint Barnabas and that other (Saint Jude, as I am

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* Such soon afterward was the disproportion of numbers at the battle of Cressy.

now reminded), if ye have so many; if not, mortgage a meadow. And let this serve as a warrant from your loving father.*
††"

"What is that to-me?" cried in agony Sir Magnus. The priest took the letter and shook his head. "Sir priest! you see how it stands with us;" said the knight. "Do deliver me from the lion's den and from the young lions!"

"Friend!" said the priest, gravely and sternly, "I know the mark of Sir Humphrey; and the handwriting is my own brother's, who, taking with him in his saddle-bag a goose-pie and twelve strings of black pudding for Sir Humphrey, left his cure at Tamworth but four months ago, and joined the army in France, in order to shrive the wounded. It is my duty to make known unto the sheriff whatever is irregular in my parish."

"Oh, for the love of Christ, say nothing to the sheriff! I will confess all," exclaimed the knight.

The attendants and many of the customers and country-folks had listened at the door, which was indeed wide open; and the priest, being now confirmed in his suspicion by the knight's offer to "confess all," walked slowly through them, mounted his palfrey, and rode over to the sheriff at Penkridge. The two young gentlemen were delighted on seeing the consternation of Sir Magnus and his company, and encouraged by the familiarity of one among them, led him aside and said, "It will be well and happy for you if you persuade the others of your party to return home speedily. The sheriff is a shrewd severe man, and will surely send every soul of you into Picardy, excepting such as he may gibbet on the common for an ensample."

"Masters!" replied the Warwickshire wag, "I will return among them and frighten them into the road; but you two brave lads shall have your horses, and your father his, together with such attendants as you little reckon on. Are ye for the wars?"

"We were going," said they gayly, "whenever we could raise enough moneys from our father's tenantry; for he, much as he desires to have us with him, is very loath to be badly equipped; and would peradventure see us rather slain in battle, or (what he thinks worse) not in it at all, than villanously mounted."

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* The mark of a knight, instead of his name, is not to be wondered at. Out of the thirty-six barons who subscribed the Magna Charta, three only signed with their names.

"Will ye take me?" cried the gallant yeoman.

"Gladly," answered they both together.

Ralph Roebuck was the name of this brave youngster; and, without another word, he ran among his fellows, and putting his hand above his ear, as our hunters are wont, shouted aloud, "Who's for hanging this fine morning?" "Ralph!" chimed they together, somewhat languidly, "what dost mean?"

"I mean," whispered he slowly and distinctly to the nearest, "that the country will be up in half an hour; that the priest is gone for the sheriff; and that if he went for the devil he could fetch him. I never knew a priest at a fault, whatever he winded. Whosoe'er has a horse able to carry him is in luck. In my mind there will be some heels without a stirrup under them before to-morrow, kick as they may to find it. I must not however be unfaithful to my master, for whom I have spoken a fair word and worn a smiling face, in my perils and tribulations, with these stout young gallants. Each to his own bit and bridle: the three led chargers let no man touch, on his life. For the rest, I will be spokesman, in lack of a better. May we meet again in Charlecote, at least half the number we set out!"

Away they ran, saddled their horses, and rode off. Ralph, who had lately been put in the stocks by his master for drinking a cup too much and for singing a song by no means dissuasive of incontinence, now for the first time began to think of it again, and expected a like repose after less baiting. Presently came up a swart, thin, fierce little man, with four others bearing arms. He, observing Ralph, ordered him to "stand," in the king's name. Ralph had been standing, and stood, with his arms before him, hanging as if they were broken.

"Varlet and villain!" cried the under-sheriff, for such was the little man, "who art thou?"

"May it please your honor," answered he submissively, "my name is a real one and my own, such as it is."

"And what may it be, sirrah!"

"Ralph Roebuck."

"Egad!" cried the little man starting at it, "that too sounds like a feigned one. Ye are all rogues and vagrants. Where are thy fellows?"

"I can answer only for myself, may it please your worship!" said Ralph.

"Where is thy leader, vagabond!" cried the magistrate, more and more indignant.

"God knows," answered Ralph, dolorously.

"Has he fled with the rest of his gang?"

"God grant he may," ejaculated Roebuck, "rather than hang upon the cursed tree."

The under-sheriff then ordered his people to hold Ralph in custody, and went and saluted the two De Ardens, who requested that clemency might be shown to every one implicated in an offence so slight.

"We must consider of that," answered the under-sheriff. "Edward à Brocton, the priest of Cannock here, has given me this letter, which he swears is written by his brother William, priest of Tamworth, and marked by your worshipful father." The young men bowed. "Who is the rogue that defrauded him," resumed the under-sheriff, "in the three horses, to our lord the king's great detriment and discomfort?"

It was not for them, they replied, to incriminate any one; nor indeed would they knowingly bring any man's blood on their heads, if they could help it.

"The impostor in the house shall be examined," cried the little man, drawing his forefinger along his lips, for they were foamy. He went into the room and found the knight in a shower of tears.

"Call my varlets! call my rogues!" cried Sir Magnus, wringing his hands and turning away his face.

"Rogues!" said the under-sheriff. "They are gone off, and in another county, or near upon it; else would I hang them all speedily, as I will thee, by God's pleasure. How many horses hast thou in the stable?"

"Sir! good sir! gentle sir! patience a little! Let me think awhile!" said the knight.

"Ay, ay, ay! let thee think forsooth!" scornfully and canorously in well-sustained tenor hymned the son of Themis. "This paper hath told me."

"Worthy sir!" said the knight, "hear reason! Hear truth and righteousness and justification by faith! Hear a sinner in tribulation, in the shadow of death!"

"Faith, sirrah! thou art very near the substance, if there be any," interposed the under-sheriff.

"Nay, nay! hold, I beseech you! As I have a soul to be saved" —

"Pack it up then! pack it up! I will give it a lift when it is ready."

"O sir sheriff, sir sheriff! I am disposed to swear on the rood, I am not, and never was, Sir Nigel de Arden."

At these words the under-sheriff laughed bitterly, and said, "Nor I neither;" and, going out of the room, ordered a guard to stand at the door.

Henry then took him by the arm and said softly, "Gildart! do not be severe with the poor young man below. It is true he is in the secret, which he swears he will not betray if he dies for it; but he promises us the three horses without trial or suit or trouble or delay, and hopes you will allow his master to leave the kingdom in peace and safety under his conduct, promising to serve the king, together with us, faithfully in his wars."

"We could not do better," answered the under-sheriff, "if we were certain the fellow and his gang would not waylay and murder you on the road."

"Never fear!" cried Henry. "As we shall have other attendants, and are neither less strong nor (I trust) less courageous than he, we will venture, with your leave and permission."

This was given in writing. The under-sheriff ordered his guards to bring down the culprit, who came limping and very slow.

"Pity he cannot feign and counterfeit a little better on the spur of the occasion!" said the under-sheriff. "He well answers the description of fat and lazy: as for drunken, it shall not be to-day on Cannock ale or Burton beer."

When the knight had descended the stairs, and saw Ralph Roebuck, he shrieked aloud with surprise and gladness, "O thou good and faithful servant! enter into the joy of thy lord!"

"God's blood!" cried Ralph. "I must enter then into a thing narrower than a weasel's or a wasp's hole. To what evil have you led us?"

"Now you can speak for me!" said the knight.

Ralph shook his head and sighed, "It will not do, master! I am resolved to keep my promise, which you commanded upon first setting out, though it may cost me limb or life. Master, one word in your ear."

"No whisperings! no connivances! no plans or projects of escape!" cried the guard. They helped Sir Magnus into his saddle with more than their hands and arms; which, instead of officiousness, he thought an indignity, though it might be the practice of those parts. The two De Ardens mounted two of the richly caparisoned steeds; the third was led by their servant, who went homeward with those also which they had ridden for what was necessary, being ordered to rejoin them at Lichfield. Ralph Roebuck sat alert on his own sorrel palfrey, a quick and active one, with open transparent nostrils. He would, as became him, have kept behind his master, if the knight had not called him to his side, complaining that the length and roughness of the roads had shaken his saddle so as to make it uneven and uneasy. Many and pressing were the offers of Ralph to set it right: Sir Magnus shook his head, and answered that "man is born to suffering as the sparks fly upward."

"I could wish, sir," said Ralph, "if it did not interfere with higher dispensations"—

"The very word, Ralph! the very word! thou rememberest it! I could not bring it nicely to mind. Several Sundays have passed since we heard it. Well! what couldst thou wish?"

"That your worship had under you at this juncture the cushion of our late good Lady Joan, which might serve you now somewhat better than it did at the battle of the bulrush. We all serve best in our places."

"By our lady! Ralph! I never saw a man so much improved by his travels as thou art. What shall we both be ere we reach home again?"

Ralph persuaded his master how much better it were that his worship did not return too speedily among the cravens and recreants who had deserted him, and who probably would be pursued; and then what a shame and scandal it would be, if such a powerful knight as Sir Magnus should see them dragged from his own hall, and from under his own eyes, to prison. If by any means it could be contrived to prolong the journey a few days, it would be a blessing; and the De Ardens, it might be hoped, would say nothing of the matter to the sheriff. Sir Magnus felt that his importance would be lowered by the seizure of his servants, in his presence and under his roof; and he had other reasons for wishing to ride leisurely, in which his more active companions little participated. On their urging him to push forward, he complained that his horse had been neglected, and had neither tasted oat nor bean, nor even sweet meadow-hay, at Cannock. His company expressed the utmost solicitude that this neglect should be promptly remedied, and, grieving that the next stage was still several miles distant, offered, and at the same time exerted, their best services in bringing the hungry and loitering steed to a trot. Sir Magnus now had his shrewd suspicions, he said, that the saddle had been ill looked to, and doubted whether a nail from behind might not somehow have dropped lower. When he would have cleared up his doubts by the agency of his hand, again the whip, applied to his flinching steed, disturbed the elucidation; and his knuckles, instead of solving the knotty point, only added to its nodosity. At last he cried, "Roebuck! Roebuck! gently, softly! If we go on at this rate, in another half-hour I shall be black and bloody as ever rook was that dropped ill-fledged from the rookery."

"The Lord hath well speeded our flight," said Ralph relenting: "he hath delivered us from our enemies. What miles and miles have we travelled, to all appearance, in a few hours!"

"Not many hours indeed," answered the knight, still pondering. "What is yon red spire?" added he.

"The Tower of Babel," replied Ralph composedly.

"I cannot well think it," muttered Sir Magnus in suspense. "They would never have dared to rebuild it, after God's anger thereupon."

It was the spire of Lichfield cathedral.

When they entered the city they found there some hundreds of French prisoners, taken in the late skirmishes, who were chattering and laughing and boasting of their invincibility. Their sun-burned faces, their meagre bodies, their loud cries, and the violence our surly countrymen expressed at not being understood by them, although as natives of Lichfield they spoke such good English, removed in part the doubts of Sir Magnus, even before he heard our host cry, "By God! a very Babel!" Later in the evening came some Welshmen, having passed through Shropshire and Cheshire with mountain sheep for the fair the next morning. These too were unintelligible in their language, and different from the others. They quarrelled with the French for mocking them, as they thought. Sir Magnus expressed his wonder that an Englishman, which the host was, should be found in such a far country, among the heathen; albeit some of them spoke English, not being able for their hearts and souls to do otherwise, since all the languages in the world were spoken there as a judgment on the ungodly. He confessed he had always thought Babel was in another place, though he could not put his finger upon it exactly. Nothing, he added, so clearly proved the real fact, as that the sheep themselves were misbegotten and black-faced, and several of them altogether tawny like a Moor's head he had seen, he told them, in the chancel-window of Saint Mary's at Warwick. "Which reminds me," said the pious knight, "that the hour of Angelus must be at hand; and, beside the usual service, I have several forms of thanksgiving to run through before I break bread again."

It was allowed him to go alone upstairs for his devotions, in which, ye will have observed, he was very regular. Meanwhile the landlord and his two daughters, two buxom wenches, were admitted into the secret; and it was agreed that at supper all should speak a jargon, by degrees more and more confused, and that at last every imaginable mistake should be made in executing the orders of the company. The girls entered heartily into the device, and the rosy-faced father gave them hints and directions while the supper was being cooked. Sir Magnus came down, after a time, covered with sweat. He protested that the heat of the climate in these countries was intolerable, particularly in his bedroom; that indeed he had felt it before, in the open air, but only on certain portions of the body which certain stars have an influence upon, and not at all in the face.

The oven had been heated just under the knight's bed, in order to supply loaves for the farmers and drovers the following day.

Supper was now served: bread however was wanting. The knight desired one of the young women to give him some. She looked at him in astonishment, shrank back, blushed, and hid her face in her apron. The father came forward furiously, and said many words, or rather uttered many sounds, which Sir Magnus could not understand. He requested his attendant Ralph to explain. Ralph made a few attempts at English, and, failing in it, spoke very fluently another tongue. The father and his daughters stared one at another, and brought a bucket of hot water, with a square of soap; then a goose's wing; then a sack of gray peas; then a blackbird in a cage; then a mustard-pot; then a handful of brown paper; then a pair of white rabbits, hanging by the ears. Sir Magnus now addressed the other girl. She appeared more willing to comply, and, making a sign at her father, whose back was turned in his anxiety to find what was called for, as if she would be kinder still when he was out of the way, laid her arm across the neck of the knight, and withdrew it hesitatingly and timidly. At this instant a great dog entered, allured by the smell of the meat. The knight's lips quivered, and the first accents he uttered audibly and distinctly were, — "Seeking whom he may devour." Then falling on his knees, he cried aloud, "O Lord! thy mercies are manifold! I am a sinner."

The girl trembled from head to foot, ready to burst with the laughter she was suppressing, and kissed her father, and appeared to implore his pardon. He pushed her back and cried, "Away! I saw thee! I saw thee with these very eyes!" clenching his fist and striking his brow franticly. "I saw thy shadow upon the wall. No wickedness is hidden."

"The hand-writing! the hand-writing! — that was upon the wall, too! perhaps upon this very one," exclaimed the conscience-stricken and aghast Sir Magnus. He fell on his knees, and praised the Lord for allowing to the host again the use of his mother-tongue; for the salvation of him a sinner; if indeed it were not the Lord himself who spake by the lips of his servant in the words, "No wickedness is hidden." After a prayer, he protested that, although indeed his heart was corrupt, as all hearts were, the devil had failed to inflame him universally. Not one knew what he said. Humphrey laughed and nodded assent; Henry offered him baked apples; Ralph brushed his doublet-sleeve.

Before it was light in the morning, the horses were at the door; nobody appeared; no money had been paid or demanded: nevertheless it seemed an inn. They mounted; they mused; they feared to meet each other's eyes: at last Ralph addressed one of the De Ardens in a low voice, but so as to be heard by his master. The two brothers tried each a monosyllable: Ralph shook his head, and they looked despondently. Attempts were renewed at intervals for several miles; when suddenly a distant bell was heard, probably from the cathedral, and Humphrey cried, "Matins! matins!" At this moment all spoke English perfectly, and the knight uttered many fervent ejaculations. The others related their sufferings and visions; and when they had ended, Sir Magnus said he seemed to hear throughout the night the roaring of a fiery furnace, for all the world like King Nebuchadnezzar's; only that sinful bodies, and not righteous ones, were moved and shoved backward and forward in it, until their bones grated like iron, and until his own teeth chattered so in his head he could hear them no longer.

His conductor was careful to avoid the county of Warwick, lest any one should recognize the knight, little as was the chance of it; for he never had been further from home than at Warwick, and there but twice, the distance being five good miles. On his way toward the coast, he wondered to find the stars so very like those at Charlecote; and some of them seemed to know him and wink at him. He thought indeed here were a good many more of them awake and stirring; because he had been longer out of doors than he had ever been before, at night. Slowly as he would have travelled, if he had been allowed his own way, on the sixth morning from his adventure at Cannock he had come within sight of the coast. To his questions no other answer was returned, than that the times were unquiet; that the roads were infested with robbers; and that the orders of a sheriff were as a king's. In the afternoon, the travellers descended the narrow holloway that leads into the seaport town of Hastings. Ralph pointed at some sailors who were stepping into a boat, and cried, "Master! what do you think of these?"

"I think, Roebuck," answered he, after pondering some moments, "that they are like unto those who go down into the great waters."

The De Ardens were conveying their stores and horses aboard, to lose no time, when Ralph whispered in the ear of the knight, "Sir Knight! do not, for the love of Christ! do not venture with those two dare-devils any further. Let us take only a small boat, just large enough to enter the Avon. There is a short cut hereabout, if we could find it. For six pieces of gold we may hire as many sailors to hazard their liberties and lives for us, and see us safe at home again."

"Six pieces of gold!" repeated Sir Magnus very slowly and distinctly: "six pieces of gold, in these hard times, go well-nigh to purchase an acre of pasture-land."

"True," replied Roebuck, "with a hundred of sand and a thousand of sea thrown in, as hoof and shank to a buttock of beef."

"Indeed!" interjected Sir Magnus. "Why, then, would not it be better to look out for some such investment of said moneys, and to get the indentures fairly engrossed forthwith?"

"Investment! indentures!" cried Ralph. "Master! it is well for those who can carry by land and sea such fine learned words about with 'em, which are enough to show a man's gentility all the world over."

It is uncertain whether Sir Magnus heard him, for he continued to utter and repeat the substance of his reflections.

"What a quantity of fishes there must be in a thousand acres of deep salt water, being well looked to! Rats and otters might sneeze their hearts out before they could catch a fin, with the brine and foam bobbing up everlastingly and buffeting their whiskers; and the poachers must buy limekilns, and forests, and mines of pure poison, if they would make the fish drunk at the bottom. Furthermore, there never could be a lack of sand at Charlecote these twenty years to come, for kitchen or scullery or walk before the hall-windows, or repairs of cow-house or dove-cot; and many a cart-load would be lying in store for sale."

"There is great foresight and cleverness in all this," said Ralph; "and if your worship had only six gold pieces in the world, no time ought to be lost in running with 'em seaward. But to my foolishness, three for life and three for liberty seem reasonable enough. Pirates, and even fair-fighting enemies, such as those gentlemen over the way, demand for a knight's ransom as many hundreds."

The knight drew back and hesitated.

"Well, sir!" said Ralph, "the business is none of mine. I have been let go ere now for an old song when I had angered my man: here I have angered nobody. I am safe anywhere, and welcome in most places."

"I am fain to learn that old song of his," said the knight inaudibly.

Roebuck continued: "I have no hall with antlers in it; I would rather eat a sucking-pig than a swan, and a griskin than a heron; and I can do either with good-will about noon any day in seven, bating Friday, and without mounting up three long steps that run across the room, or resting my feet on a dainty mat of rushes. A good blazing kitchen-fire is enough for me. I care neither for bucks nor partridges. As for spiced ale at christenings and weddings, I may catch a draught of it when it passes. Sack I have heard of: poor tipple, I doubt, that wants sweetening. But a horn of home-brewed beer, frothing leisurely, and humming lowly its contented tune, is suitable to my taste and condition; and I envy not the great and glorious who have a goose with a capon in his belly on the table, or even a peacock, his head as good as alive, and the proudest of his feathers to crown him."

The knight answered, "Somehow I do not like to part with my gold: I never saw any in coinage till last Easter;* and it seems so fresh and sunshiny and pleasant, I would keep it to look at in damp weather. Pay the varlets in groats."

"Sir Knight!" replied Ralph, "do not let them see your store of groats, which are very handy, and sundry of these likewise are quite new."

"Nobody would pay away new groats that could help it," sighed Sir Magnus.

"The gold must go, and make room for more," said Roebuck. The knight answered nothing; but turning round, lest anybody should notice his capacious and well-stored scrip, he drew forth the six pieces, and, after a doubt and a trial with his thumb and finger, whether by reason of their roughness two peradventure might not stick together and make seven, he placed them in the palm of Roebuck, who took them with equal silence and less uncertainty. Great contentment was manifested by the worshipful knight that the two De Ardens had left him; and he ate a good dinner, and drank a glass of Rhenish, which he said was "pure sour;" and presently was anxious to go aboard the boat, if it was ready. Ralph conducted him to it, and helped him in. The rowers for some time played their parts lustily, and then hoisted sail. Roebuck asked the oldest of them whether the wind was fair. "Passably," said he; "but unless we look sharp we may be carried into the Low Countries."

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* The first gold coined in England came out rather more than a year before this time, that is in 1344; the quantity was small, and probably the circulation not rapid nor extensive.

"I do not see anywhere that short cut, nor that brook which runs into the Avon," said Sir Magnus. "As for the Low Countries, no fear of them: the water rises before us, and we mount higher and higher every moment, insomuch that I begin to feel as if I were going up in a swing, like that between the elms."

Presently Old Ocean exacted from him his tribute, which the powerfullest not of knights only and barons, but of princes and kings, must pay him in his own dominions, bending their heads and stretching out their arms and acknowledging his supremacy with tears and groans. He now fancied he had been poisoned on shore; and was confirmed in his belief when Roebuck hummed a tune without any words to it, prodigal and profuse as he was of them on ordinary occasions; and when neither he nor any of the sailors would bring him such a trifle as water-gruel sweetened with clary wine, or camomile flowers picked with the dew upon them and simmered in fair spring-water and in an earthen pan, or viper-broth with a spoonful of Venice-treacle in it, stirred with the tusk of a wild boar in the first quarter of the moon: the only things he asked them for. Soon however his pains abated; yet he complained that his eyesight was so affected he seemed to see nothing but greenish water, like leek-porridge, albeit by his reckoning they must now be near the brook.

"Methinks," said he, "we are running after that great white ship yonder."

"Methinks so too," answered Ralph; crying, "How is this?" with apparent anger, to the sailors.

"It cannot be otherwise," said one of them; "the boat is the brig's own daughter: what mortal can keep them asunder! You might as well hope to hold tight by your teeth a two months' calf from its dam."

"Why didst not thou see to that, Ralph?" cried the knight in the bitterness of his soul. "Always rash and imprudent!"

Roebuck attempted to console his master with the display of the honors that would be shown him aboard the brig, when his quality should be discovered. Then, taking advantage of a shoal of porpoises, that rolled and darted in every direction round the boat, he showed them to Sir Magnus, who turned pale at seeing them so near him. "Never be frightened at a parcel of bots!" cried Roebuck.

"Bots! what, those vast creatures?"

"Ay, surely," said one of the sailors. "The sea-horses void them by millions in a moment: you may sometimes see a thousand of them sticking on a single hair of their tails."

"Do those horses come within sight then?" said Sir Magnus, tremulously.

"Only when they are itchy," answered the mariner; "and then they contrive to slip between a boat and a brig, and crack a couple or three at a time of these troublesome little insects."

Sir Magnus said something to himself about the wonders of the great deep, and praised God for having kept hitherto such a breed of bots out of his stables. He began to see clearly how fitted every thing is to the place it occupies; and how certainly these creatures were created to be killed between brigs and boats.

Meditations must have their end, though they reach to heaven.

Great as had been the consternation of Sir Magnus at the sight of the porpoises, and at the probability that a hair of some stray marine horse, covered over with them, might lie between him and the river, — greater still was it, if possible, at approaching the brig, and discerning the two De Ardens. "What can they want with me?" cried he. "I am resolved not to go home with them."

Roebuck raised his spirits, by swearing that nothing of the kind should happen while he had a drop of blood in his veins. "Hark! Sir Knight!" said he. "Observe how the two young gentlemen are behaving."

Gayly indeed did they accost him, and imperiously cried they to the crew, "Make way for Sir Magnus Lucy!"

"Behold, sir, your glorious name hath already manifested itself," said Ralph.

A rope-ladder was let down; and the brothers knelt, and inclined their bodies, and offered their hands to aid him in mounting. "Here are honors paid to my master!" said Roebuck, exultingly. Sir Magnus himself was highly gratified with his reception, and resolved to defer his interrogatory on the course they seemed to be taking. He was startled at dinner-time when the captain with strange familiarity entitled him "Sir Mag." The following words were even more offensive; for when the ship rolled somewhat, though moderately, the trencher of Sir Magnus fell into his lap; and the captain cried, ''Nay, nay, Sir Mag! as much into gullet as gullet will hold, but clap nothing below the girdle." He protested he had no design to secrete any thing. The sailors played and punned, as low men are wont, on his family name; and, on his asking what the fellows meant by their impudence, a scholar from Oxford of whom he inquired it, one who liked the logic of princes better than that of pedants, told him they wished to express by their words and gestures that he was, in the phrase of Horace, *ad unguem factus*.

"I do not approve of any phrases," answered he, somewhat proudly; "and pray, sir, tell them so."

"Sir!" said Roebuck in his ear, "although you may be somewhat disappointed in the measure of respect paid to you aboard, you will be compensated on landing."

Sir Magnus thought hereby that his tenants would surely bring him pullets and chines. As they approached the coast, "I told you, sir!" exclaimed he. "Look at the bonfire on the very edge of the sands! — they could not make it nearer you." A fire was blazing, and there were loud *huzzas* as the ship entered the port.

"I would still be *incog.* if possible," said Sir Magnus, hollowing his cheeks and voice, and recovering to himself a great part of his own estimation. "Give the good men this money; and tell them in future not to burn a serviceable boat for me, in want of brushwood. I will send them a cartload of it another time, on due application."

The people were caulking a fishing-smack: they took the money, hooted at Sir Magnus, and turned again to their labor.

After the service of the day, the King of England was always pleased to watch the ships coming over, to observe the soldiers debarking, and to learn the names of the knights and esquires who successively crossed the channel. He happened to be riding at no great distance; and ordered one of his attendants to go and bring him information of the ship and her passengers, particularly as he had seen some stout horses put ashore. This knight was an intimate friend of De Arden the father, and laughed heartily at the adventure, as related by Humphrey. He repeated it to the king, word for word as nearly as he could. "Marry!" said the king; "three fat horses, with a bean-field (I warrant) in each, are but an inadequate price for such a name. I doubt whether we have another among us that was in any degree noble before the Norman conquest. We ourselves might have afforded three decent ones in recompense for the dominion and property of nearly one whole county, and that county the fairest in England. Let the boys make the knight show his prowess, as some of his family have done. I observe they ride well, and have the prudence to exercise their horses on their first debarking, lest they grow stiff and lose their appetite. Tell them I shall be glad to hear of them, and then to see them."

Sir Magnus, the moment he set foot on shore, was welcomed to land by Roebuck. "No, no! rogue Ralph!" said he, nodding. "I know the Avon when I see it. Here we are. None of your mummery, good people," cried he, somewhat angrily, when several ragged French — men, women, and children — asked him for charity. "We will have no Babel here, by God's blessing."

Soon came forward two young knights, and told him it was the king's pleasure he should pitch his tent above *Eu*, on the right of this same river *Brete*.

"Youngsters!" cried he arrogantly, "I shall pitch nothing; neither tent (whatever it may be), nor quoit, nor bar. Know ye, I am Sir Magnus Lucy, of Charlecote."

The young knights, unceremoniously as he had treated them, bowed profoundly and said they bore the king's command, leaving the execution of it to his discretion.

"The king's," repeated he. "What have I done? Has that skipping squirrel of an under-sheriff been at the king's ear about me?"

They could not understand him; and, telling him that it would be unbecoming in them to investigate his secrets, made again their obeisance, and left him. He then turned toward Ralph, the polar star in every ambiguity of his courses.

"Honored master, Sir Magnus!" answered Ralph, "let no strife be between us, nor ill blood, that alway maketh ill counsels boil uppermost in the pot."

"Roebuck!" said the knight, surveying him with silent admiration, "now speakest thou soundly and calmly; for thou hast taken time in the delivery thereof, and communed with thyself, before thou didst trust the least trustworthy of thy members. But I do surmise from thy manner, and from the thing spoken, that thou hast somewhat within thee which thou wouldst utter yet."

"Worshipful sir!" subjoined Ralph, "although I do not boast of my services — as who would? — yet, truth is truth. I have saved your noble neck from the gallows: forasmuch as you took a name, worshipful sir, which neither king nor father ever gave you, and which belongeth to others rightfully. Now if both the name and the horses had been found at once upon you, a miracle only could have saved you from that bloody-minded under-sheriff. Providential was it for you, Sir Knight, that those two young gentlemen, whether in mercy they counterfeited the letter" —

"No, no, no! the priest's own brother wrote it: the priest deposed to the handwriting."

"Then," said Ralph calmly, lifting up the palms of his hands towards Sir Magnus, "let us praise the Lord!"

"Hei-day? Ralph! why! art even thou grown devout? Verily this is a great mercy; a great deliverance. I doubt whether the best part of it (praised be the Lord nevertheless!) be not rather for thee, than for such a sinner as I am. For thou hast lost no horse; and yet art touched as if thou hadst lost a stud: thou hast not suffered in the flesh; and yet thy spirit is very contrite."

"Master!" said Ralph, "only one thing is quite plain to me; which is, that Almighty God decrees we should render our best services to our country. Your three horses followed you for idle pomp: vanity prompted you to appear what you are not."

"Very wrong, Ralph!"

"And yet, Sir Magnus, if you had not committed this action, which in your pious and reasonable humility you call very wrong, perhaps three gallant youths (for Sir Magnus Lucy by God's grace shall be the third) had remained at home in that sad idleness, which leads to an unprivileged and tongue-tied old age. We are now in France" —

"Ralph! Ralph!" said Sir Magnus, "be serious still. Faith! I can hardly tell when thou art and when thou art not, being so unsteady a creature."

"Sir Magnus, I repeat it, we are now in Normandy or Picardy, I know not rightly which; where the king also is, and where it would be unseemly if any English knight were not. The eyes of England and of France are fixed upon us. Here we must all obey, the lofty as well as the humble."

"Obey? ay, to be sure, Ralph! Thou wilt obey me: thou art not great enough to obey the king; therefore set not thy heart upon it."

Ralph smiled and replied, "I offered my service to the young De Ardens, which they graciously accepted. As however they have their own servants with 'em, if you, my honored master, can trust me, who have more than once deceived you, but never to your injury, I will with their permission continue to serve you, and that right faithfully. Whatever is wanting to the dignity of your appearance is readily purchased in this country, from the many traffickers who follow the camp, and from the great abundance of Normandy. So numerous too are the servants who have lost their masters, you may find as many as your rank requires, or your fortune can maintain. There are handier men among them than I am; and I do not ask of you any place of trust above my betters. Such as I am, either take me, Sir Magnus, or leave me with the two brave lads."

"Ralph!" answered the knight, "I cannot do without thee, since I am here; as it seems I am!" and he sighed. "About those servants that have lost their masters — I wish thou couldst have held thy peace. I would not fain have such unlucky varlets. But some of these masters, let us hope, may be found. Thou dost not mean they are dead; that is, killed!"

"Missing," said Ralph, consolatorily.

"I thought so: I corrected thee at the time. Now my three horses, the king being here, if thou speakest truth, I can have them up by *certiorari* at his Bench."

"They would be apt to leap it, I trow," replied Ralph, "with such riders upon their backs. Master, be easy about them!"

"Ismael is very powerful: he could carry me anywhere in reason," said Sir Magnus.

"Do not let the story get wind," answered his counsellor, "lest we never hear the end of it. I promise you, my worthy master, you shall have Ismael again after the wars."

"He will have longer teeth, and fewer marks in his mouth, before that time," said sorrowfully Sir Magnus.

"No bridle can hold him, when he is wilful," replied Ralph; "and although peradventure he might carry your worship clean through the enemy, once or twice, yet Ismael is not the horse to be pricked and goaded by pikes and arrows, without rearing and plunging, and kicking off helmets by the dozen, nine ells from the ground. Let those Staffordshire lads break him in and bring him home."

"Tell them so! tell them so!" said Sir Magnus, rubbing his hands. "And find me one very strong and fleet, and very tractable, and that will do any thing rather than plunge and rear at being pricked, if such bloody times should ever come over again in the world: for, as I never yet gave any man cause to mock at me, I will do my utmost to make all reverent of me, now I am near the king." Thus he spoke, being at last well aware that he was indeed in France; although he was yet perplexed in spirit in regard to his having been at Babel.

However, some time afterward he was likewise cured of this scepticism; as by degrees men will be on such points, if they seek the truth in humility of spirit. Conversing one day with Roebuck on past occurrences, he said, after a pause, "Ralph! I have confessed unto thee many things, as thou likewise hast confessed many unto me; the which manner of living and communing was very pleasant to the gentle saints, Paul and Timothy. And now I do indeed own that I have seen men in these parts beyond sea, and doubt not that there be likewise such in others, who in sundry matters have more of worldly knowledge than I have, — knowledge, I speak of, not of understanding. In the vanity of my heart, having at that time seen little, I did imagine and surmise that Babel lay wider of us; albeit I could not upon oath or upon honor say where or whereabout. It pleased the Lord to enlighten me by signs and tokens, and not to leave me for the scorn of the heathen and the derision of the ungodly. Had I minded his word somewhat more, when in my self-sufficiency I thought I had minded little else and knew it off-hand, I should have remembered that we pray every Sabbath for the peace of Jerusalem, and of Sion, and of Israel; meaning thereby (as the priest admonishes the simpler of the congregation) our own country, albeit other names have been given in these latter days to divers parts thereof. By the same token I might have apprehended that Babel lay at no vast distance."

Roebuck listened demurely, smacking his lips at intervals like a carp out of pond, and looking grave and edified. Tired however with this geographical discursion, burred and briared and braked with homilies, he reminded his master that no time was to be lost in looking for a gallant steed, worthy to bear a knight of distinction. "My father," said he, "made a song for himself, in readiness at fair or market, when he had a sorry jade to dispose of: —

" 'Who sells a good nag
On his legs may fag
  Until his heart be weary.
Who buys a good nag,
And hath groats in his bag,
  May ride the world over full cheery.' "

"Comfortable thoughts, both of 'em!" said Sir Magnus. "I never sold my nags: and I have groats enow, — if nobody do touch the same. Not knowing well the farms about this country, and the day being more windy than I could wish it, and proposing still to remain for awhile incognito, and being somewhat soiled in my apparel by the accidents of the voyage, and furthermore my eyes having been strained thereby a slight matter, it would please me, Roebuck, if thou wentest in search of the charger: the troublesome part of looking at his quarters, and handling him, and disbursing the moneys, I myself may, by God's providence, bring unto good issue."

Ralph accepted the commission, and performed it faithfully and amply. He returned with two powerful chargers, magnificently caparisoned, and told his master that he would grieve to the day of his death if he let either of them slip through his fingers. Sir Magnus first asked the prices, and then the names of them. He was informed that one was called Rufus, and the other Beauclerc, after two great English kings. Inquiring of Ralph the history of these English kings, and whether he had ever heard of them, and on the confession of Ralph in the negative, he was vexed and discontented, and told Ralph he knew nothing. The owner of the horses was very fluent in the history of the two princes, which nearly lost him his customer; for the knight shook his head, saying he should be sorry to mount a beast of such an unlucky name as Rufus: above all, in a country where arrows were so rife. As for Beauclerc, he was unexceptionable.

"A horse indeed!" cried Roebuck; "in my mind, sir! Ismael is not fit to hold a candle to him."

"I would not say so much as that," gravely and majestically replied the knight: "but this Beauclerc has his points, Roebuck." Sir Magnus purchased the two horses, and acquired into the bargain the two pages of history appertaining to their names; which, proud as he was of displaying them on all occasions, he managed less dexterously. Before long he heard on every side the most exalted praises of Humphrey and Henry; and although he was by no means invidious, he attributed a large portion of the merit to Ismael, and appealed to Roebuck whether he did not once hear him say that Jacob too would show himself one day or other. Stimulated by the glory his horses had acquired, horses bred upon his own land, and by the notice they had attracted from our invincible Edward, under two mere striplings of half his weight, he himself within a week or fortnight was changed in character. Sloth and inactivity were no longer endurable to him. He exercised his chargers and himself in every practice necessary to the military career; and at last being presented to the king, Edward said to him that, albeit not being at

Westminster, nor having his chancellor at hand, he could not legally enforce the payment of the three angels still due (he understood) as part of the purchase-money of sundry chargers, nevertheless he would oblige the gallant knight who bought them to present him on due occasion a pair of spurs for his acquittance.

The ceremony was not performed in the presence of the king, whose affairs required him elsewhere, but in the presence of his glorious son, after the battle of Cressy. Here Sir Magnus was surrounded, and perhaps would have fallen, being still inexpert in the management of his arms, when suddenly a young soldier, covered with blood, rushed between him and his antagonist, whom he levelled with his battle-axe, and fell exhausted. Sir Magnus had received many bruises through his armor, and noticed but little the event; many similar ones, or nearly so, having occurred in the course of the engagement. Soon however that quarter of the field began to show its herbage again in larger spaces; and at the distant sound of the French trumpets, which was shrill, fitful, and tuneless, the broken ranks of the enemy near him waved like a tattered banner in the wind, and melted, and disappeared. Ralph had fought resolutely at his side, and, though wounded, was little hurt. The knight called him aloud: at his voice not only Ralph came forward, but the soldier who had preserved his life rolled round toward him. Disfigured as he was with blood and bruises, Ralph knew him again: it was Peter Crosby of the bulrush. Sir Magnus did not find immediately the words he wanted to accost him: and indeed, though he had become much braver, he had not grown much more courteous, much more generous, or much more humane. He took him however by the hand, thanked him for having saved his life, and hoped to assist in doing him the same good turn.

Roebuck in the mean time washed the several wounds of his former friend and playmate, from a cow's horn containing wine; of which, as he had reserved it only against thirst in battle, few drops were left. Gashes opened from under the gore, which made him wish that he had left it untouched; and he drew in his breath, as if he felt all the pain he awakened.

"Well meant, Ralph! but prythee give over!" said Crosby, patiently. "These singings in my head are no merry-makings."

"Master! — if you are there — I would liefer have lain in Hampton churchyard among the skittles, or as near them as might be, so as not to spoil the sport; and methinks had it been a score or two of years later, it were none the worse. Howsoever, God's will be done! Greater folks have been eaten here by the dogs. Welladay, and what harm? Dogs at any time are better beasts than worms, and should be served first. They love us, and watch us, and help us while we are living: the others don't mind us while we are good for any thing. There are chaps, too, and feeding in clover, who think much as they do upon that matter.

"Give me thy hand, Ralph! Tell my father I have done my best. If thou findest a slash or two athwart my back and loins, swear to him, as thou safely mayest do on all the Gospels, and on any bone of any martyr, that they closed upon me and gave them when I was cutting my way through — aweary with what had been done already — to lend my last service — to our worthy master."

Now, Messer Francesco, I may call upon you, having seen you long since throw aside your gravity, and at last spring up alert as though you would mount for Picardy.

Petrarca. A right indeed have you acquired to call upon me, Ser Geoffreddo; but you must accept from me the produce of our country. Brave men appear among us every age almost; yet all of them are apt to look to themselves: none will hazard his life for another; none will trust his best friend. Such is our breed; such it always was. In affairs of love alone have we as great a variety as you have, and perhaps a greater. I am by nature very forgetful of light occurrences, even of those which much amused me at the time; and if your greyhound, Messer Geoffreddo, had not been laying his muzzle between my knees, urging my attention, shivering at the cold of this unmatted marble, and treading upon my foot in preference, I doubt whether you would ever have heard from me the story I shall now relate to you.

It occurred the year before I left Avignon; the inhabitants of which city, Messer Giovanni will certify, are more beautiful than any others in France.

Boccaccio. I have learned it from report, and believe it readily; so many Italians have resided there so long, and the very flower of Italy: amorous poets, stout abbots, indolent priests, high-fed cardinals, handsome pages, gigantic halberdiers, and crossbow-men for ever at the mark.

Petrarca. Pish! pish! let me find my way through 'em, and come to the couple I have before my eyes, and the spaniel that was the prime mover in the business.

Tenerin de Gisors knew few things in the world; and, if he had known all therein, he would have found nothing so valuable, in his own estimation, as himself. The ladies paid much court to him, and never seemed so happy as in his presence: this disquieted him.

Boccaccio. How the deuce! he must have been a saint then: which accords but little with his vanity.

Petrarca. You might mistake there, Giovanni! The observation does not hold good in all cases, I can assure you.

Boccaccio. Well, go on with him.

Petrarca. I do think, Giovanni, you tell a story a great deal more naturally; but I will say plainly what my own eyes have remarked, and will let the peculiarities of men appear as they strike me, whether they are in symmetry with our notions of character, or not.

Chaucer. The man of genius may do this: no other will attempt it. He will discover the symmetry, the relations, and the dependencies, of the whole: he will square the strange problematic circle of the human heart.

Pardon my interruption; and indulge us with the tale of Tenerin.

Petrarca. He was disquieted, I repeat, by the gayety and familiarity of the young women, who, truly to speak, betray at Avignon no rusticity of reserve. Educated in a house where music and poetry were cultivated, he had been hearing from his earliest days the ditties of broken hearts and desperation; and never had he observed that these invariably were sung under leering eyes, with smiles that turned every word upside-down, and were followed by the clinking of glasses, a hearty supper, and *what not!* Beside, he was very handsome: men of this sort, although there are exceptions, are usually cold toward the women; and he was more displeased that they should share the admiration which he thought due to himself exclusively, than pleased at receiving the larger part of theirs.

At Avignon, as with us, certain houses entertain certain parties. It is thought unpolite and inconstant ever to go from one into another, I do not mean in the same evening, but in your lifetime; and only the religious can do it without reproach. As bees carry and deposit the fecundating dust of certain plants, so friars and priests the exhilarating tales of beauty, and the hardly less exhilarating of frailty, covering it deeply with pity, and praising the mercy of the Lord in permitting it for an admonition to others.

There are two sisters in our city (I forgot myself in calling Avignon so), of whom among friends I may speak freely, and may even name them: Cyrilla de la Haye, and Egidia. Cyrilla, the younger, is said to be extremely beautiful: I never saw her, and few beside the family have seen her lately. She is spoken of among her female friends as very lively, very modest, fond of reading and of music: added to which advantages, she is heiress to her uncle the Bishop of Carpentras, now invested with the purple. For her fortune, and for the care bestowed on her education, she is indebted to her sister, who, having deceived many respectable young men with hopes of marriage, was herself at last deceived in them, and bore about her an indication that deceived no one. During the three years that her father lived after this too domestic calamity, he confined her in a country-house, leaving her only the liberty of a garden, fenced with high walls. He died at Paris; and the mother, who fondly loved Egidia, went instantly and liberated her, permitting her to return to Avignon, while she herself hid her grief, it is said, with young Gasparin de l'Œuf in the villa. Egidia was resolved to enjoy the first moments of freedom, and perhaps to show how little she cared for an unforgiving father. No one however at Avignon, beyond the family, had yet heard any thing of his decease. The evening of her liberation she walked along the banks of the Durance, with her favorite spaniel, which had become fat and unwieldy by his confinement and by lying all day under the southern wall of the garden, and, having never been combed nor washed, exhibited every sign of dirtiness and decrepitude. To render him smarter, she adorned him again with his rich silver collar, now fitting him no longer, and hardly by any effort to be clasped about his voluminous neck. He escaped from her, dragging after him the scarlet ribbon which she had formed into a chain, that it might appear the richer with its festoons about it, and that she might hold the last object of her love the faster. On the banks of the river he struggled with both paws to disengage the collar, and unhappily one of them passed through a link of the ribbon. Frightened and half-blind, he ran on his three legs he knew not whither, and tumbled through some low willows into the Durance. Egidia caught at the end of the ribbon; and, the bank giving way, she fell with him into deep water. She had, the moment before, looked in vain for assistance to catch her spaniel for her, and had cast a reproachful glance toward the bridge, about a hundred paces off, on which Tenerin de Gisors was leaning with his arms folded upon the battlement.

"Now," said he to himself, "one woman at least would die for me. She implored my pity before she committed the rash act, — as such acts are called on other occasions."

Without stirring a foot or unfolding an arm, he added pathetically from Ovid, —

Sic, ubi fata vocant, udis abjectus in herbis,
Ad vada Mæandri concinit albus olor.

We will not inquire whether the verses are the more misplaced by the poet, or were the more misapplied by the reciter. Tenerin now stepped forward, both to preserve his conquest and add solemnity to his triumph. He lost however the opportunity of saving his mistress, and saw her carried to the other side of the river by two stout peasants, who had been purchasing some barrels in readiness for the vintage, and who placed her with her face downward, that the water might run out of her mouth. He gave them a *livre*, on condition that they should declare he alone had saved the lady; he then quietly walked up to his neck in the stream, turned back again, and assisted (or rather followed) the youths in conveying her to the monastery near the city-gate.

Here he learned, after many vain inquiries, that the lady was no other than the daughter of Philibert de la Haye. Perpetually had he heard in every conversation the praises of Cyrilla; of her beauty, her temper, her reserve, her accomplishments; and what a lucky thing for her was the false step of her sister, immured for life, and leaving her in sole expectation of a vast inheritance. Hastening homeward, he dressed himself in more gallant trim, and went forthwith to the Bishop of Carpentras, then at Avignon, to whom he did not find admittance, as his lordship had only that morning received intelligence of his brother-in-law's decease. He expressed by letter his gratitude to Divine Providence for having enabled him to rescue the loveliest of her sex from the horrors of a watery grave; announced his rank, his fortune (not indeed to be mentioned or thought of in comparison with her merits), and entreated the honor of a union with her, if his lordship could sympathize with him in feeling that such purity ought never to have been enfolded (might he say it?) in the arms of any man who was not destined to be her husband.

"Ah!" said the bishop when he had perused the letter, "the young man too well knows what has happened: who does not? The Holy Father himself hath shed paternal tears upon it. Providential this falling into the water: this endangering of a sinful life! May it awaken her remorse and repentance, as it hath awakened his pity and compassion! His proceeding is liberal and delicate: he could not speak more passionately and more guardedly. He was (now I find) one of her early admirers. No reference to others; no reproaches. True love wears well. I do not like this matter to grow too public. I will set out for Carpentras in another hour, first writing a few lines, directing M. Tenerin to meet me at the palace this evening, as soon as may be convenient. We must forgive the fault of Egidia now she has found a good match; and we may put on mourning for the father, my worthy brother-in-law, next week."

Such were the cogitations and plans of the bishop, and he carried them at once into execution; for, knowing what the frailty of human nature is, as if he knew it from inspiration, he had by no means unshaken faith in the waters of the Durance as restorative or conservative of chastity.

Tenerin has been since observed to whistle oftener than to sing; and when he begins to warble any of his amatory lays, which seldom happens, the words do not please him as they used to do, and he breaks off abruptly. A friend of his said to him in my presence, "Your ear, Tenerin, has grown fastidious, since you walked up to it in the water on the first of August."

Boccaccio. Francesco! the more I reflect on the story you have related to us, the more plainly do I perceive how natural it is, and this too in the very peculiarity that appeared to me at first as being the contrary. Unless we make a selection of subjects, unless we observe their heights and distances, unless we give them their angles and shades, we may as well paint with white-wash. We do not want strange events, so much as those by which we are admitted into the recesses, or carried on amid the operations, of the human mind. We are stimulated by its activity, but we are greatly more pleased at surveying it leisurely in its quiescent state, uncovered and unsuspicious. Few, however, are capable of describing, or even of remarking it; while strange and unexpected contingencies are the commonest pedlery of the markets, and the joint patrimony of the tapsters.

I have drawn so largely from my brain for the production of a hundred stories, many of which I confess are witless and worthless, and many just as Ser Geoffreddo saw them, incomplete, that if my memory did not come to my assistance I should be mistrustful of my imagination.

Chaucer. Ungrateful man! the world never found one like it.

Boccaccio. Are Englishmen so Asiatic in the profusion of compliments?

I know not, Francesco, whether you may deem this cathedral a befitting place for narratives of love.

Petrarca. No place is more befitting; since, if the love be holy, no sentiment is essentially so divine; and if unholy, we may pray the more devoutly and effectually in such an audience for the souls of those who harbored it. Beside which, the coolness of the aisles and their silence, and their solitariness at the extremity of the city, would check within us any motive or tendency to lasciviousness and lightness, if the subject should lie that way, and if your spirits should incautiously follow it, my friend, Giovanni; as (pardon my sincerity!) they are somewhat too propense.

Boccaccio. My scruples are satisfied and removed.

The air of Naples is not so inclement as that of our Arezzo; and there are some who will tell us, if we listen to them, that few places in the world are more favorable and conducive to amorous inclinations. I often heard it while I resided there;

and the pulpit gave an echo to the public voice. Strange then it may appear to you, that jealousy should find a place in the connubial state, and after a year or more of marriage: nevertheless, so it happened.

The Prince of Policastro was united to a lady of his own rank; and yet he could not be quite so happy as he should have been with her. She brought him a magnificent dowry; and I never saw valets more covered with lace, fringes, knots, and every thing else that ought to content the lordly heart, than I have seen behind the chairs of the Prince and Princess of Policastro. Alas! what are all the blessings of this sublunary world, to the lord whose lady has thin lips! The princess was very loving; as much after the first year as the prince was after the first night. Even this would not content him.

Time, Ser Geoffreddo, remembering that Love and he in some other planet flew together, and neither left the other behind, is angry to be outstripped by him, and challenges him to a trial of speed every day. The tiresome dotard is always distanced, yet always calls hoarsely after him; as if he had ever seen Love turn back again, any more than Love had seen him. Well, let them settle the matter between themselves.

Would you believe it?—the princess could not make her husband in the least the fonder of her by all her assiduities; not even by watching him while he was awake, more assiduously than the tenderest mother ever watched her sleeping infant. Although, to vary her fascinations and enchantments, she called him wretch and villain, he was afterward as wretched and villanous as if she never had taken half the pains about him.

She had brought in her train a certain Jacometta, whom she persuaded to espy his motions. He was soon aware of it, and calling her to him, said,—

"Discreet and fair Jacometta, the princess, you know very well, thinks me inattentive to her; and being unable to fix on any other object of suspicion, she marks out you, and boasts among her friends that she has persuaded a foolish girl to follow and watch me, that she may at last, by the temptation she throws into our way, rid herself of a beauty who in future might give her great uneasiness. Certainly, if my heart could wander, its wanderings would be near home. I do not exactly say I should prefer you to every woman on earth, for reason and gratitude must guide my passion; and, unless where I might expect to find attachment, I shall ever remain indifferent to personal charms. You may relate to your mistress whatever you think proper of this conversation. If you believe a person of your own sex can be more attached and faithful to you than the most circumspect of ours, then repeat the whole. If on the contrary you imagine that I can be hereafter of any use to you, and that it is my interest to keep secret any confidence with which you may honor me, the princess has now enabled us to avoid being circumvented by her. It cannot hurt me: you are young, unsettled, incautious, and unsuspicious."

Jacometta held down her head in confusion: the prince taking her by the hand, requested her not to think he was offended. He persuaded her to let him meet her privately, that he might give her warning if any thing should occur, and that he might assist her to turn aside the machinations of their enemy. The first time they met, nothing had occurred: he pressed her hand, slipped a valuable ring on one of the fingers, and passed. The second time nothing material, nothing but what might be warded off: let the worst happen, the friend who gave him information of the designs laid against her would receive her. The princess saw with wonder and admiration the earnestness with which Jacometta watched for her. The faithless man could hardly move hand or foot without a motion on the part of her attendant. She had observed him near the chamber-door of Jacometta, and laughed in her heart at the beguiled deceiver. "Do you know, Jacometta, I myself saw him within two paces of your bedroom!"

"I am quite confident it was he, madam!" answered Jacometta: "and I do believe in my conscience he comes every night. What he wants I cannot imagine. He seems to stop before the tube-roses and carnations on the balustrade, whether to smell at them a little, or to catch the fresh breezes from Sorrento. I fancied at first he might be restless and unhappy (pardon me, madonna!) at your differences."

"No, no," said the princess, with a smile, "I understand what he wants: never mind, make no inquiries; he is little aware how we are planning to catch him. He has seen you look after him; he fancies that you care about him, that you really like him, absolutely love him, — I could almost laugh, — that you would (foolish man! foolish man! genuine Policastro!) listen to him. Do you understand?"

Jacometta's two ears reddened into transparency; and, clapping a hand on each, she cried, after a long sigh, "Lord! can he think of me? is he mad? does he take a poor girl for a princess? Generally I sleep soundly; but once or twice he has awakened me, perhaps not well knowing the passage. But if, indeed, he is so very wicked as to design to ruin me, and what is worse to deceive the best of ladies, might it not be advisable to fasten in the centre and in the sides of the corridor five, or six, or seven sharp swords, with their points toward whoever — "

"Jacometta! do nothing violently; nothing rashly; nothing without me."

There was only one thing that Jacometta wished to do without the princess; and certainly she was disposed to do nothing violently or rashly, for she was now completely in the interest (these holy walls forbid me to speak more explicitly) of Policastro.

"We will be a match for him," said the princess. "You must leave your room-door open to-night."

Jacometta fell on her knees, and declared she was honest though poor, — an exclamation which I dare say, Messer Geoffreddo, you have often heard in Italy: it being the preface to every act of roguery and lubricity, unless from a knight or knight's lady. The Princess of Policastro was ignorant of this, and so was Jacometta when she used it. The mistress insisted; the attendant deprecated.

"Simple child! no earthly mischief shall befall you. To-night you shall sleep in my bed, and I in yours, awaiting the false wretch miscalled my husband."

Satisfied with the ingenuity of her device, the princess was excessively courteous to the prince at dinner, and indeed throughout the whole day. He on his part was in transports, he said, at her affability and sweet amiable temper. Poor Jacometta really knew not what to do: scarcely for one moment could she speak to the prince, that he might be on his guard.

"Do it! do it!" said he, pressing her hand as she passed him. "We must submit."

At the proper time he went in his slippers to the bedroom of the princess, and entered the spacious bed; which, like the domains of the rich, is never quite spacious enough for them. Jacometta was persuaded to utter no exclamation in the beginning, and was allowed to employ whatever vehemence she pleased at a fitter moment. The princess tossed about in Jacometta's bed, inveighing most furiously against her faithless husband; her passionate voice was hardly in any degree suppressed. Jacometta too tossed about in the princess's bed, and her voice labored under little less suppression. At last the principal cause of vexation, with the jealous wife, was the unreasonable time to which her husband protracted the commission of his infidelity. After two hours or thereabout, she began to question whether he really had ever been unfaithful at all; began to be of the opinion that there are malicious people in the world, and returned to her own chamber. She fancied she heard voices within, and listening attentively, distinguished these outcries: —

"No resistance, madam! An injured husband claims imperatively his promised bliss, denied him not through antipathy, not through hatred, not through any demerits on his part, but through unjust and barbarous jealousy. Resist! bite! beat me! 'Villain' — 'ravisher' — am I? am I? Excruciated as I am, wronged, robbed of my happiness, of my sacred conjugal rights, may the Blessed Virgin never countenance me, never look on me or listen to me, if this is not the last time I ask them, or if ever I accept them though offered."

At which, he rushed indignantly from the bed, threw open the door, and, pushing aside the princess, cried raving, "Vile, treacherous girl! standing there, peeping! half-naked! At your infantine age dare you thus intrude upon the holy mysteries of the marriage-bed?"

Screaming out these words, he ran like one possessed by the devil into his own room, bolted the door with vehemence, locked it, cursed it, slipped between the sheets, and slept soundly.

The princess was astonished: she asked herself, Why did not I do this? why did not I do that? The reason was, she had learned her own part, but not his. Scarcely had she entered her chamber, when Jacometta fell upon her neck, sobbing aloud, and declaring that nothing but her providential presence could have saved her. She had muffled herself up, she said, folding the bed-clothes about her double and triple, and was several times on the point of calling up the whole household in her extremity, strict as was her mistress's charge upon her to be silent. The princess threw a shower of odoriferous waters over her, and took every care to restore her spirits and to preserve her from a hysterical fit, after such exertion and exhaustion. When she was rather more recovered, she dropped on her knees before her lady, and entreated and implored that, on the renewal of her love in its pristine ardor for the prince, she never would tell him in any moment of tender confidence that it was she who was in the bed.

The princess was slow to give the promise; for she was very conscientious. At last however she gave it, saying, "The prince my husband has taken a most awful oath never to renew the moments you apprehend. Our Lady strengthen me to bear my heavy affliction! Her divine grace has cured my agonized breast of its inveterate jealousy."

She paused for some time; then, drying her tears, for she had shed several, she invited Jacometta to sit upon the bedside with her. Jacometta did so; and the princess, taking her hand, continued: "I hardly know what is passing in my mind, Jacometta! I found it difficult to bear an injury, though an empty and unreal one; let me try whether the efforts I make will enable me to endure a misfortune, — on the faith of a woman, my dear Jacometta, no unreal nor empty one. Policastro is young: it would be unreasonable in me to desire he should lead the life of an anchorite, and perhaps not quite reasonable in him to expect the miracle of my blood congealing."

After this narration, Messer Francesco walked toward the high altar and made his genuflexion: the same did Messer Giovanni, and, in the act of it, slapped Ser Geoffreddo on the shoulder, telling him he might dispense with the ceremony, by reason of his inflexible boots and the buck-skin paling about his loins. Ser Geoffreddo did it nevertheless, and with equal devotion. His two friends then took him between them to the house of Messer Francesco, where dinner had been some time waiting.

XV. BARROW AND NEWTON.

Newton. I come, sir, before you with fear and trembling, at the thoughts of my examination to-morrow. If the masters are too hard upon me, I shall never take my degree. How I passed as bachelor I cannot tell: it must surely have been by especial indulgence.

Barrow. My dear Isaac! do not be dispirited. The less intelligent of the examiners will break their beaks against the gravel, in trying to cure the indigestions and heart-burnings your plenteousness has given them; the more intelligent know your industry, your abilities, and your modesty: they would favor you, if there were need of favor, but you, without compliment, surpass them all.

Newton. Oh sir! forbear, forbear! I fear I may have forgotten a good deal of what you taught me.

Barrow. I wonder at that. I am older than you by many years; I have many occupations and distractions; my memory is by nature less retentive: and yet I have not forgotten any thing *you* taught *me*.

Newton. Too partial tutor, too benevolent friend! this unmerited praise confounds me. I cannot calculate the powers of my mind, otherwise than by calculating the time I require to compass any thing.

Barrow. Quickness is among the least of the mind's properties, and belongs to her in almost her lowest state: nay, it doth not abandon her when she is driven from her home, when she is wandering and insane. The mad often retain it; the liar has it, the cheat has it; we find it on the race-course and at the card-table: education does not give it, and reflection takes away from it.

Newton. I am slow; and there are many parts of ordinary learning yet unattained by me.

Barrow. I had an uncle, a sportsman, who said that the light dog beats over most ground, but the heavier finds the covey.

Newton. Oftentimes indeed have I submitted to you problems and possibilities —

Barrow. And I have made you prove them.

Newton. You were contented with me; all may not be.

Barrow. All will not be: many would be more so if you could prove nothing. Men, like dogs and cats, fawn upon you while you leave them on the ground; if you lift them up they bite and scratch; and if you show them their own features in the glass, they would fly at your throat and tear your eyes out. This between ourselves; for we must not indulge in unfavorable views of mankind, since by doing it we make bad men believe that they are no worse than others, and we teach the good that they are good in vain. Philosophers have taken this side of the question to show their ingenuity; but sound philosophers are not ingenious. If philosophy can render us no better and no happier, away with it! There are things that can; and let us take them.

What dost thou sigh at, Isaac?

Newton. At my ignorance, in some degree, of their writings.

Barrow. At your ignorance of the ignorant? No man ever understood the things that are most admired in Plato and Aristoteles. In Plato there are incoherencies that fall to pieces at a touch; and Aristoteles lost himself in the involutions of his own web. What must we think of a philosopher, who promised to teach one pupil that which he withheld from the rest, although these were more familiar with him, and more instructed? And what must we think of a pupil, who was indignant that any others should partake in his sentiments and his knowledge? Yet such men have guided the scientific, such men have ruled the world.

Newton. Not such was Bacon.

Barrow. No, indeed. I told you, and I repeat it, I think the small volume of *Essays* in your hand contains more wisdom and more genius than we can find in all the philosophers of antiquity; with one exception, Cicero. On which I desired you to peruse it attentively, and to render me an account of it according to your opinion.

Newton. Sir, I have been induced to believe, but rather from the authority of my elders than from my own investigation, that Bacon is the more profound of the two, although not the more eloquent.

Barrow. If Bacon had written as easily and harmoniously as Cicero, he would have lost a portion of his weight with the generality of the learned, who are apt to conceive that in easy movement there is a want of solidity and strength. We must confess that antiquity has darkened colleges and has distorted criticism. Very wise men, and very wary and inquisitive, walk over the earth, and are ignorant not only what minerals lie beneath, but what herbs and foliage they are treading. Some time afterward, and probably some distant time, a specimen of ore is extracted and exhibited; then another; lastly the bearing and diameter of the vein are observed and measured. Thus it is with writers who are to have a currency through ages. In the beginning they are confounded with most others; soon they fall into some secondary class; next, into one rather less obscure and humble; by degrees they are liberated from the dross and lumber that hamper them; and, being once above the heads of contemporaries, rise slowly and waveringly, then regularly and erectly, then rapidly and majestically, till the vision strains and aches as it pursues them in their ethereal elevation.

Neither you nor I have wasted our time in the cultivation of poetry; but each of us hath frequently heard it discoursed on by those who have; and, if it serves for nothing else, it serves for an illustration. In my early days, he would have been scoffed out of countenance who should have compared the *Lycidas*, or the *Allegro* and *Penseroso*, of Mr. John Milton to the sterling poetry (as it was called) of Dr. John Donne: and yet much may be said in favor of the younger; and there are those, and not only undergraduates, but bachelors and masters, who venture even to prefer him openly. Who knows but we may see him extolled to the level of Lucan and Statius, strong as is the sense of the University against all sorts of supplanters! There are eyes that cannot see print when near them; there are men that cannot see merit.

Newton. The Latin secretary may be pardoned for many defects in his poetry, and even for many in his politics, in consideration of the reverence he bore toward the *Apocalypse*. I cannot think him a very irreligious man, although he does not attend divine service, we are told, so regularly as we could have wished.

Barrow. Let us talk no more about him. I opposed his principles: nevertheless he may have acted conscientiously; and even his principles are now coming again into fashion, and among the sons of those very cavaliers who would have hanged him. Perhaps the most dangerous of his doctrines, the lawfulness of setting aside God's anointed for misconduct, may soon be the leading one in the front of our Constitution. Well! we are not met for politics: only it would be salutary to consider, if God's anointed will not be set aside, what must be done, — how avoid the commission of a diabolical act.

Newton. Could we rightly understand the *Revelation*, I question not but every difficulty of this nature would be solved.

Barrow. May be: let us trust in God.

Newton. We must have certain *data* for every thing upon which we reason: the greater part of reasoners begin without them.

Barrow. I wish the event may answer your expectations; that the *Apocalypse*, the *Argonautic Expedition*, and the *Siege of Troy*, form the trident which is to push away our difficulties in navigating through all the rocks and shoals of time, — all those of religion, and all those of history. Happen what may, I doubt nothing of your surpassing the foremost of your competitors, — of your very soon obtaining a name in the University little below Doctor Spry's of Caius, Doctor Brockhouse's of St. John's, Doctor Cockburn's of Emanuel, Doctor Turnbull's of Peter-house, or Doctor Cruikshank's of Bennet; nay, a name which, within a few years, may reach even to Leyden and Paris, as that of a most studious young man, distinguished alike for application and invention.

Newton. Although I could not in conscience disclaim the small merit there may be in application, since I owe it to the encouragement of my tutor, I surely have no right or title to invention.

Barrow. You have already given proofs of it beyond any man I know. Your questions lead to great discoveries; whether it please God that you hereafter make them, or some one following you, is yet uncertain. We are silly enough to believe that the quality of invention, as applied to literature, lies in poetry and romance, mostly or altogether. I dare to speculate on discoveries in the subjects of your studies, every one far greater, every one far more wonderful, than all that lie within the range of fiction. In our days, the historian is the only inventor; and it is ludicrous to see how busily and lustily he beats about, with his string and muzzle upon him.

I wish we could drag him for a moment into philosophical life: it would be still more amusing to look at him, as he runs over this loftier and dryer ground, throwing up his nose and whimpering at the prickles he must pass through.

Few men are contented with what is strictly true concerning the occurrences of the world: it neither heats nor soothes. The body itself, when it is in perfect health, is averse to a state of rest. We wish our prejudices to be supported, our animosities to be increased; as those who are inflamed by liquor would add materials to the inflammation.

Newton. The simple verities, important perhaps in their consequences, which I am exploring, not only abstract me from the daily business of society, but exempt me from the hatred and persecution to which every other kind of study is exposed. In poetry, a good pastoral would raise against one as vehement enemies as a good satire. A great poet in our country, like the great giant in Sicily, can never move without shaking the whole island; while the mathematician and astronomer may pursue their occupations, and rarely be hissed or pelted from below. You spoke of historians: it would ill become a person of my small experience to discourse on them after you.

Barrow. Let me hear, however, what you have to say, since at least it will be dispassionate.

Newton. Those who now write history do certainly write it to gratify a party, and to obtain notoriety and money. The materials lie in the cabinet of the statesman, whose actions and their consequences are to be recorded. If you censure them, you are called ungrateful for the facilities he has afforded you; and, if you commend them, venal. No man, both judicious and honest, will subject himself to either imputation.

Barrow. Not only at the present day, but always, the indulgence of animosity, the love of gain, and the desire of favor have been the inducements of an author to publish in his lifetime the history of his contemporaries. But there have been, and let us hope there may be, judicious and virtuous men, so inflamed by the glory of their country in their days, that, leaving all passions and prejudices, they follow this sole guide, and are crowned by universal consent for commemorating her recent exploits.

Newton. Here are reasons enough for me rather to apply my mind as you direct it, than to the examination of facts which never can be collected by one person; or to poetry, for which I have no call; or to the composition of essays, such as those of Montaigne and Bacon; or dialogues, such as those of Cicero and Plato, and, nearer our times, of Erasmus and Galileo. You had furnished me before with arguments in abundance; convincing me that, even if I could write as well as they did, the reward of my labors would be dilatory and posthumous.

Barrow. I should entertain a mean opinion of myself, if all men or the most-part praised and admired me: it would prove me to be somewhat like them. Sad and sorrowful is it to stand near enough to people for them to see us wholly; for them to come up to us and walk round us leisurely and idly, and pat us when they are tired and going off. That lesson which a dunce can learn at a glance, and likes mightily, must contain little, and not good. Unless it can be proved that the majority are not dunces, — are not wilful, presumptuous, and precipitate, — it is a folly to care for popularity. There are indeed those who must found their fortunes upon it; but not with books in their hands. After the first start, after a stand among the booths and gauds and prostitutes of party, how few have lived contentedly, or died calmly! One hath fallen the moment when he had reached the last step of the ladder, having undersawed it for him who went before, and forgotten that knavish act; another hath wasted away more slowly, in the fever of a life externally sedentary, internally distracted; a third, unable to fulfil the treason he had stipulated, and haunted by the terrors of detection, snaps the thread under the shears of the Fates, and makes even those who frequented him believe in Providence.

Isaac! Isaac! the climbing plants are slender ones. Men of genius have sometimes been forced away from the service of society into the service of princes; but they have soon been driven out, or have retired. When shall we see again, in the administration of any country, so accomplished a creature as Wentworth,* the favorite of Charles? Only light men recover false steps: his greatness crushed him. Aptitude for serving princes is no proof or signification of genius, nor indeed of any elevated or extensive knowledge. The interests of many require a multiplicity of talents to comprehend and accomplish them. Mazarin and Richelieu were as little able as they were little disposed to promote the well-being of the community; both of them had keen eyes, and kept them on one object, — aggrandizement. We find the most trivial men in the streets pursuing an object through as many intricacies, and attaining it; and the schemes of children, though sooner dropped, are frequently as ingenious and judicious. No person can see more clearly than you do the mortifications to which the ambitious are subject; but some may fall into the snares of ambition whose nature was ever averse to it, and whose wisdom would almost reach any thing, and only seems too lofty to serve them watchfully as a guard. It may thus happen to such as have been accustomed to study and retirement, and fall unexpectedly on the political world by means of recommendations. There are those, I doubt not, who would gladly raise their name and authority in the State by pushing you forward, as the phrase is, into Parliament. They seize any young man who has gained some credit at college, no matter for what, whether for writing an epigram or construing a passage in Lycophron; and, if he succeeds to power, they and their family divide the patronage. The ambitious heart is liable to burst in the emptiness of its elevation: let yours, which is sounder, lie lower and quieter. Think how much greater is the glory you may acquire by opening new paths to science, than by widening old ones to corruption. I would not whisper a syllable in the ear of faction; but the words of the intelligent, in certain times and on certain occasions, do not vary with parties and systems. The royalist and republican meet: the difference lies merely in the intent, the direction, and the application. Do not leave the wise for the unwise, the lofty for the low, the retirement of a college for the turbulence of a House of Commons. Rise, but let no man lift you: leave that to the little and to the weak. Think within yourself, I will not say how impure are the sources of election to our Parliament, but how inconsiderable a distinction is conferred on the representative, even where it is not an individual who nominates, or only a few who appoint him, but where several hundreds are the voters. For who are they, and who direct them? — the roughest bear-guard, the most ferocious bull-baiter, the most impudent lawyer, the tinker that sings loudest, and the parson that sits latest at the ale-house, hitting them all by turns with his tobacco-pipe, calling them all sad dogs, and swearing till he falls asleep he will hear no more filthy toasts. Show me the borough where such people as these are not the most efficient in returning a candidate to Parliament; and then tell me which of them is fit to be the associate — it would be too ludicrous to say the patron — of a Euclid or an Archimedes? My dear Newton! the best thing is to stand above the world; the next is to stand apart from it on any side. You *may* attain the first; in trying to attain it, you are certain of the second.

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* He far excelled in energy and capacity the other councillors of Charles; but there was scarcely a crueller or (with the exception of his master) a more perfidious man on either side. Added to which, he was wantonly oppressive, and sordidly avaricious.

Newton. I am not likely to be noticed by the great, nor favored by the popular. I have no time for visiting: I detest the strife of tongues; all noises discompose me.

Barrow. We will then lay aside the supposition. The haven of philosophy itself is not free at all seasons from its gusts and swells. Let me admonish you to confide your secrets to few: I mean the secrets of science. In every great mind there are some: every deep inquirer hath discovered more than he thought it prudent to avow, as almost every shallow one throws out more than he hath well discovered. Among our learned friends, we may be fully and unreservedly philosophical; in the company of others we must remember, first and chiefly, that discretion is a part of philosophy, and we must let out only some glimpses of the remainder.

Newton. Surely no harm can befall us from following a chain of demonstrations in geometry, or any branch of the mathematics.

Barrow. Let us hope there may be none; nevertheless we cannot but recollect how lately Galileo was persecuted and imprisoned for his discoveries.

Newton. He lived under a popish government.

Barrow. My friend! my friend! all the most eminently scientific, all the most eminently brave and daring in the exercise of their intellects, live, and have ever lived, under a popish government. There are popes in all creeds, in all countries, in all ages. Political power is jealous of intellectual; often lest it expose and mar its plans and projects, and oftener lest it attract an equal share of celebrity and distinction. Whenever the literary man is protected by the political, the incitement to it is the pride of patronage; not the advancement of letters, nor the honor they confer on the cultivator or the country.

Newton. That is rational in England which beyond the Alps is monstrous. By God's blessing, I firmly believe in the *Holy Scriptures;* yet, under your discretion and guidance, I would be informed if the sun's rays in Syria could ever be above the horizon for twenty-four hours, without a material alteration, without an utter derangement, of our whole mundane system?*

Barrow. Reserve that question for a future time and a wiser teacher. At present, I would only remark to you that our mundane system *has* been materially altered; and that its alterations may have been attributed to other causes than the true, and laid down by different nations as having taken place at different epochs and on different occasions, sometimes to gratify their pride, sometimes to conceal their ignorance.

Newton. I am not quite satisfied.

Barrow. Those who are quite satisfied sit still and do nothing; those who are not quite satisfied are the sole benefactors of the world.

Newton. And are driven out of it for their pains.

Barrow. Men seldom have loved their teachers.

Newton. How happens it, then, that you are loved so generally; for who is there, capable of instruction, that you have not taught? Never, since I have been at the University, have I heard of any one being your enemy who was not a Calvinist, — a sect wherein good-humored and gracefully-minded men are scanty.

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* Newton was timid and reserved in expressing his opinions, and was more orthodox (in the Anglican sense of orthodoxy) early in life than later. What he thought at last is not clear; and perhaps it was well for him that it was no clearer. Under his eyes, in the reign of William III., a youth of eighteen was punished with death for expressing such opinions as our philosopher hinted to Le Clerc. To remove and consume the gallows on which such men are liable to suffer is among the principal aims and intents of these writings.

Barrow. Do not attribute the failing to the sect, which hath many strong texts of Scripture for its support; but rather think that the doctrines are such as are most consentaneous to the malignant and morose. There are acrid plants that attract as many insects as the sweeter, but insects of another kind. All substances have their commodities, all opinions their partisans. I have been happy in my pupils; but in none of them have I observed such a spirit of investigation as in you. Keep it, however, within the precincts of experimental and sure philosophy, which are spacious enough for the excursions of the most vigorous mind, and varied enough for the most inconstant and flighty. Never hate, never dislike men, for difference of religion. Some receive baleful impressions in it more easily than others, as they do diseases. We do not hate a child for catching the small-pox, but pity its sores and blemishes. Let the Calvinist hate us: he represents his God as a hater, he represents him as capricious. I wish he would love us, even from caprice; but he seems to consider this part of the Divine nature as a weakness.

Come, unroll your paper; let me hear what you have to say on Bacon's *Essays*, — a volume I place in the hand of those only who appear to me destined to be great.

Newton. He says in his Preface, —

"I do now publish my *Essays*, which of all my *other* works have been most current."

How can the very thing of which you are speaking be *another?*

Barrow. This is a chasm in logic, into which many have fallen.

Newton. I had scarcely begun the first Essay, when an elderly gentleman of another college came into the room, took up the book, and read aloud, —

"This same truth is a naked and open daylight, that doth not show the masks and mummeries and triumphs of the world half so stately and daintily as candle-lights. Truth may, perhaps, come to the price of a pearl, that showeth best by day; but it will not rise to the price of a diamond or carbuncle, that showeth best in varied lights. A mixture of a lie doth ever add pleasure. Doth any man doubt that, if there were taken out of men's minds vain opinions, flattering hopes, false valuations, imaginations as one would, and the like, but it would leave the minds of a number of men poor shrunken things, full of melancholy and indisposition, *and unpleasing to themselves?*"

"One might well imagine," said he, "unpleasing to themselves, *if* full of melancholy and indisposition. But how much of truth and wisdom is compressed in these few sentences! Do not you wonder that a man capable of all this should likewise be capable of such foolery as the following: —

"First he breathed light upon the face of the matter, or chaos; then he breathed light into the face of man; and still he *breatheth and inspireth* light into the face of his chosen."

I looked with wonder at him, knowing his seriousness and gravity, his habits and powers of ratiocination, and his blameless life. But perhaps I owe to his question the intensity and sedulity with which I have examined every page of Bacon. He called the words I have quoted dull and colorless bombast; he declared them idle in allusion, and false and impious. I was appalled. He added, "I do not know, Mr. Newton, whether you have brothers: if you have, what would you think of your father when he gave a cherry to one, a whipping to a second, and burned the fingers of a third against the bars of his kitchen grate, and vouchsafed no better reason for it than that he had resolved to do so the very night he begot them? Election in such a case is partiality; partiality is injustice. Is God unjust?"

I could have answered him, by God's help, if he had given me time; but he went on, and said: "Bacon had much sagacity, but no sincerity; much force, but no firmness. It is painful to discover in him the reviler of Raleigh, the last relic of heroism in the dastardly court of James. It is horrible to hear him, upon another occasion, the apologist of a patron's disgrace and death, — the patron, whose friendly hand had raised him to the first steps of the highest station."

"Sir," answered I, "his political conduct is not the question before us."

"It may, however," said he, "enlighten us in regard to his candor, and induce us to ask ourselves whether, in matters of religion, he delivered his thoughts exactly, and whether he may not have conformed his expression of them to the opinions of his master."

Barrow. I hope you dropped the discussion after this.

Newton. No; I cried resolutely, "Sir, when I am better prepared for it, I may have something to say with you on your irreverent expressions."

Barrow. Mr. Newton, do not be ruffled. Bacon spoke figuratively; so did Moses, to whom the allusion was made. Let the matter rest, my dear friend.

Newton. I told him plainly he was unfair: he was no friend to Bacon. He smiled at me and continued: "My good Newton, I am as ready to be told when I am unfair as you are to have your watch set right when it goes amiss. You say I am no friend to Bacon; and in truth, after the experience he left us in the Earl of Essex, he is not precisely the man to place one's friendship on. Yet surely no folly is greater than hatred of those we never saw, and from whom we can have received no injury. Often do I wonder when I hear violent declamations against theories and opinions; which declamations I think are as ill-directed as they would be against currents of air or watercourses. We may keep out of their way if we will. I estimate the genius of Bacon as highly as perhaps you do, and in this Essay I find a single sentence which I would rather have written than all the volumes of all the Greek philosophers; let me read it: 'Certainly, it is heaven upon earth to have a man's mind move in charity, rest in Providence, and turn upon the poles of truth.'"

Barrow. Magnificent as Shakspeare!

Newton. He who wrote tragedies?

Barrow. The same: I have lately been reading them.

Newton. Sir, should you have marked the truths he demonstrated, if any, I shall think it no loss of time to run over them, at my leisure. I have now a question to ask you on the third of these Essays. We find in it that "Quarrels and divisions about religion were evils unknown to the heathen: the reason was, because the religion of the heathen consisted rather in rites and ceremonies than in any constant belief." This is no truer of the old Paganism than of the later in the same country, which however burns men alive for slight divergencies.

"You may imagine," says Bacon, "what kind of faith theirs was, when the chief doctors and fathers of their church were the poets."

I read this loudly and triumphantly to my friend, who paused and smiled, and then asked me complacently whether it were better to imprison, burn, and torture, or to send away the audience in good humor and good fellowship; and whether I should prefer the conversation and conviction of Doctor Bonner and Doctor Gardiner to those of Doctor Tibullus and Doctor Ovid. I thought the question too flippant for an answer, which indeed was not quite at hand. He proceeded: "'God has this attribute, that he is a jealous God, and therefore his worship and religion will endure no mixture.' His jealousy must be touched to the quick," said my friend: "for every century there comes forth some new pretender, with his sect behind him in the dark passages; and his spouse was hardly at her own door after the nuptials, ere she cried out and shrieked against the filthiness of an intruder."

I was lifting up my eyes and preparing an ejaculation, when he interrupted me, and continued: "'It is certain that heresies and schisms are *of all others* the greatest scandals; yea, more than corruption of manners: for, as in the natural body a wound, or solution of continuity, is worse than a corrupt humor'—"

Here he laid down the volume, and said, "I will ask the professor of surgery whether a cut in the finger is worse than a scrofula: I will then go to the professor of divinity, and ask him whether the best Christian in Cambridge ought to be hanged to-morrow morning."

I stared at him: whereupon he declared that every church on earth is heretical and schismatical, if the word of Christ is the foundation of the true; and that the fellow who was hanged last week for *corruption of manners* had, according to the decision of Bacon, more Christianity in him than all the heads of colleges. "When he would follow theologians," said my friend, "he falls into gross absurdities: he corrects himself, or only trips harmlessly, when he walks alone."

I myself was obliged to agree with my disputant, in censuring an exception. Speaking of *sanguinary persecutions to force consciences*, the author blames them, "except it be in cases of *overt scandal*, *blasphemy*, &c." Now who shall decide what is *overt scandal*, or what is *blasphemy?* That which is prodigiously so in one age and one country is not at all in another. Such exceptions are the most pernicious things a great author can sanction.

Barrow. I side with you. We come now, I perceive, to the Essay *On Revenge.*

Newton. "There is no man doth a wrong for the wrong's sake, but thereby to purchase himself profit, or pleasure, or honor, *or the like:* therefore why should I be angry with a man for loving himself better than me?"

If this be an excuse, why send a rogue to prison? All the crimes that men commit are committed because they love themselves better than others; and it is the direction and extent of this loving, to the detriment of others, that constitutes the magnitude of the crime. Cruelty is the highest pleasure to the cruel man: it is his love. Murder may ensue; and shall we not be *angry with him* for loving himself better than the murdered?

On Simulation and Dissimulation, we are told, "The best composition and temperature is to have a power to feign, if there be no remedy."

Barrow. In other words, to lie whenever we find it convenient. The last two decisions you have reported from him as little become the chancellor as the philosopher; as little the philosopher as the citizen. Why will you not read on?

Newton. I am afraid to mention the remark of my visitor on a sentence in the Essay *Upon Goodness.*

Barrow. Fear not: what is it?

Newton. "The desire of knowledge in excess caused man to fall."

Barrow. This is a sin the most rarely of all committed in our days. If the earth is to be destroyed by fire, the bottom of a rushchair will serve to consume all who are guilty of it; and what falls from heaven may fall upon other offenders.

Newton. "Do you believe," said my friend, "that God punished men for wishing to be wiser? for wishing to follow him and to learn his pleasure? for wishing that acquisition by which beneficence and charity may be the most luminously and extensively displayed? No, Newton, no! The Jews, who invented this story, were envious of the scientific; for they were ignorant of the sciences. Astronomy, among the rest, was odious to them; and hence the fables stuck against the Tower of Babel, the observatory of a better and a wiser people, their enemy, their conqueror. Take care, or you may be hanged for shooting at the stars. If these fictions are believed and acted on, you must conceal your telescope and burn your observations."

On my representing to him the effects of divine justice in casting down to earth the monument of human pride, he said: "The Observatory of Babylon was constructed of unbaked bricks, and upon an alluvial soil. Look at the Tower of Pisa; look at every tower and steeple in that city: you will find that they all lean, and all in one direction, that is, toward the river. Some have fallen; many will fall. God would not have been so angry with the Tower of Babel, if it had been built of Portland stone a few weeks' journey to the westward, and you had been as importunate as the Babylonians were in their attempts at paying him a visit."

He expressed his wonder that Bacon, in the reign of James, should have written, "A king is the servant of his people, *or else he were without a calling*." In other words, whenever he ceases to be the *servant of the people*, he forfeits his right to the throne.

Barrow. Truth sometimes comes unaware upon caution, and sometimes speaks in public as unconsciously as in a dream.

Newton. Sir, although you desired me rather to investigate and note the imperfections of my author than what is excellent in him, as you would rather the opaquer parts of the sun than what is manifest of his glory to the lowest and most insensible, yet, from the study of your writings, and from the traces of your hand in others, I am sometimes led to notice the beauties of his style. It requires the greatest strength to support such a weight of richness as we sometimes find in him. The florid grows vapid where the room is not capacious, and where perpetual freshness of thought does not animate and sustain it. Unhappily, it seems to have been taken up mostly by such writers as have least invention.

Barrow. Read to me the sentence or the paragraph that pleases you.

Newton. 'Tis *On Envy:* —

"Lastly, near kinsfolks and fellows in office, and those that have been bred together, are more apt to envy their equals when they are raised; for it doth upbraid unto them their own fortunes, and pointeth at them, and cometh oftener into their remembrance, and incurreth likewise more into the note of others; and envy ever redoubleth from speech and fame."

Barrow. Very excellent. I wish, before he cast his invectives against Raleigh, he had reflected more on a doctrine in the next page: "Those that have joined with their honor great travels, cares, or perils, are less subject to envy: for men think that they earn their honors hardly, and pity them sometimes; and pity ever healeth envy." I am afraid it will be found, on examination, that Bacon in his morality was too like Seneca; not indeed wallowing in wealth and vice and crying out against them, but hard-hearted and hypocritical; and I know not with what countenance he could have said, "By indignities men come to dignities."

Newton. I have remarked with most satisfaction those sentences in which he appears to have forgotten both the age and station wherein he lived, and to have equally overlooked the base and summit of our ruder institutions. "Power to do good," says he, as Euripides or Phocion might have said, and Pericles might have acted on it, "is the true and lawful end of aspiring; for good thoughts, though God accept them, yet towards men are little better than good dreams except they be put in act; and that cannot be without power and place, as the vantage and commanding ground."

And again: "Reduce things to the first institution, and observe wherein and how they have degenerated! But yet ask counsel of both times; *of the ancienter time what is best*, and of the latter time what is fittest."

Barrow. He spoke unadvisedly; for, true as these sentences are, they would lead toward republicanism, if men minded them. Of this, however, there is as little danger as that the servants of kings should follow the advice he gives afterward: —

"Embrace and invite helps and advices touching the execution of thy place; and do not drive away such as bring thee information, as meddlers, but accept of them in good part."

Newton. *On Seditions*, he says the matter is of "two kinds; much poverty and much discontentment." It appears to me that here is only one kind: for much discontentment may spring, and usually does, from much poverty.

Barrow. Certainly. He should not have placed cause and effect as two causes. You must however have remarked his wonderful sagacity in this brief Essay, which I hesitate not to declare the finest piece of workmanship that ever was composed on any part of government. Take Aristoteles and Machiavelli, and compare the best sections of their works to this, and then you will be able, in some degree, to calculate the superiority of genius in Bacon.

Newton. I have not analyzed the political works of Aristoteles; but I find in Machiavelli many common thoughts, among many ingenious, many just, many questionable, and many false ones.

Barrow. What are you turning over? Do not let me lose any thing you have remarked.

Newton. "Money," says my lord, "is like muck; not good except it be spread." I am afraid this truth would subvert, in the mind of a reflecting man, all that has been urged by the learned author on the advantages of nobility, and even of royalty; for which reason I dare not examine it: only let me, sir, doubt before you whether "this is to be done by suppressing, or at the least keeping a straight hand upon, the devouring trades of usury, engrossing, great pasturages, *and the like.*"

Barrow. I wish he never had used, which he often does, those silly words, *and the like.*

Newton. *Great pasturages* are not *trades;* and they must operate in a way directly opposite to the one designated.

Barrow. I know not whether a manifest fault in reasoning be not sometimes more acceptable than stale and worm-eaten and weightless truths. Heaps of these are to be found in almost every modern writer: Bacon has fewer of them than any.

Nicholas Machiavelli is usually mentioned as the deepest and acutest of the Italians: a people whose grave manner often makes one imagine there is more to be found in them than they possess. Take down that volume: read the examples I have transcribed at the end: —

"The loss of every devotion and every religion draws after it infinite inconveniences and infinite disorders."

Inconveniences and disorders would follow, sure enough: the losses, being negatives, *draw* nothing.

"In a well-constituted government, war, peace, and amity should be deliberated on, not for the gratification of a few, but for the common good."

"That war is just which is necessary."

"It is a cruel, inhuman, and impious thing, even in war, *stuprare le donne, viziare le vergini,*" &c.

"Fraud is detestable in every thing."

These most obvious truths come forward as if he had now discovered them for the first time. He tells us also that, "A prince ought to take care that the people are not without food." He says with equal gravity that, "Fraud is detestable in every thing;" and that, "A minister ought to be averse from public rapine, and should augment the public weal."

It would be an easy matter to fill many pages with flat and unprofitable sentences. I had only this blank one for it; and there are many yet, the places of which are marked with only the first words. Do not lose your time in looking for them: we must not judge of him from these defects.

Newton. Whenever I have heard him praised, it was for vigor of thought.

Barrow. He is strongest where he is most perverse. There are men who never show their muscles but when they have the cramp.

Newton. Consistency and firmness are not the characteristics of the Florentines, nor ever were. Machiavelli wished at one time to satisfy the man of probity, at another to conciliate the rogue and robber; at one time to stand on the alert for the return of liberty, at another to sit in the portico of the palace, and trim the new livery of nascent princes. If we consider him as a writer, he was the acutest that had appeared since the revival of letters. None had reasoned so profoundly on the political interests of society, or had written so clearly or so boldly.

Barrow. Nevertheless, the paper of a boy's cracker, when he has let it off, would be ill-used by writing such stuff upon it as that which you have been reading. The great merit of Machiavelli, in style, is the avoiding of superlatives. We can with difficulty find an Italian prose-writer who is not weak and inflated by the continual use of them, to give him pomp and energy, as he imagines.

Newton. Davila, too, is an exception.

Barrow. The little elegance there is among the Italians is in their historians and poets: the preachers, the theologians, the ethic writers, the critics, are contemptible in the last degree. Well; we will now leave the *Issimi* nation, and turn homeward.

You will find that Bacon, like all men conscious of their strength, never strains or oversteps. While the Italians are the same in the church and in the market-place, while the preacher and policinello are speaking in the same key and employing almost the same language, while a man's God and his rotten tooth are treated in the same manner, — we find at home convenience and proportion. Yet the French have taken more pains than we have done to give their language an edge and polish; and, although we have minds in England more massy and more elevated than theirs, they may claim a nearer affinity to the greater of the ancients.

I have been the less unwilling to make this digression, as we are now come nigh the place where we must be slow and circumspect. The subject awes and confounds me. Human reason is a frail guide in our disquisitions on royalty, which requires in us some virtue like unto faith. We cannot see into it clearly with the eyes of the flesh or of philosophy, but must humble and abase ourselves to be worthy of feeling what it is. For want whereof, many high and proud spirits have been turned aside from it by the right hand of God, who would not lead them into its lights and enjoyments because they came as questioners, not as seekers; would have walked when they should have stood, and would have stood when they should have knelt.

Newton. Sir, I do not know whether you will condescend to listen with patience to the thoughts excited in me by Bacon's observations on the character of a king.

Barrow. He shocked me by what he said before on the fragility of his title: God forbid that common men should talk like the Lord High Chancellor!

Newton. I was shocked in a contrary direction, and as it were by a repercussion, at hearing him call a king a *mortal God on earth:* and I do not find anywhere in the Scriptures that "the living God told him he should die like a man, lest he should be proud, and flatter himself that God had, with his name, imparted unto him his nature also."

Surely, sir, God would repent as heartily of having made a king, as we know he repented of having made a man, if it were possible his king should have turned out so silly and irrational a creature. However vain and foolish, he must find about him, every day, such natural wants and desires as could not appertain to a God. I made the same remark to my visitor, who said calmly: "Bacon in the next sentence hath a saving grace; and speaketh as wisely and pointedly as ever he did. He says, 'Of all kind of men, God is the least beholden to them; for he doth most for them, and they do ordinarily least for him.' A sentence not very favorable to their admission as pastors of the people, and somewhat strong against them as visible heads of the Church. But, Mr. Newton, you will detect at once a deficiency of logic in the words, 'That king that holds not religion the best reason of state is void of all piety and justice, the supporters of a king.' Supposing a king soundly minded and well educated, — a broad supposition, and not easily entering our preliminaries, — may not he be just, be pious, be religious, without holding his religion as the best reason of state, or the best guide in it? Must he be void of *all* piety, and *all* justice, who sometimes thinks other reasons of state more applicable to his purposes than religion? Psalms and sack-cloth are admirable things; but these, the last expedients of the most contrite religion, will not always keep an enemy from burning your towns and violating your women, when a few pieces of cannon, and loftiness of spirit instead of humiliation, will do it."

He went on, and asserted that the king is not the sole fountain of honor, as he is called in the Essay, and cannot be more fairly entitled so than the doctors in convocation. He remarked that the king had not made him master of arts; which dignity, he said, requires more merit than the peerage: whereupon he named several in that order, of whose learning or virtues I never heard mention, and even of whose titles I thought I never had until he assured me I must, and expressed his wonder that I had forgotten them. When he came to the eighth section, — "he is the life of the law," — "the law leads a notoriously bad life," said he, "and therefore I would exempt his Majesty from the imputation: and indeed if 'he animateth the dead letter, making it active toward all his subjects,' the parliament and other magistratures are useless. In the ninth paragraph he makes some accurate observations, but ends weakly. 'He that changeth the fundamental laws of a kingdom thinketh there is no good title to a crown but by conquest.' What! if he changes them from the despotic to the liberal? — if, knowing the first possession to have been obtained by conquest, he convokes the different orders of his people, and requests their assent to the statutes he presents? Nothing can be more pedantic than the whole of the sixteenth section."

Barrow. But there are sound truths in it, and advice too good to be taken every day.

Newton. On Nobility: —

"A great and potent nobility . . . putteth life and spirit into the people, *but presseth their fortune.*"

"The man must have turned fool," said my friend, "to write thus. Are life and spirit put into people by the same means as their fortune is depressed?"

On Atheism: —

"'The fool hath said in his heart there is no God.' It is not said, 'the fool hath *thought* in his heart.'"

No, nor is it necessary; for to say *in his heart*, is to think *within himself;* to be *intimately convinced.*

"It appeareth in nothing more, that atheism is rather in the lip than in the heart of man, than by this, — that atheists will ever be talking of that their opinion as if they fainted in it within themselves, and would be glad to be strengthened by the consent of others: nay more, you shall have atheists strive to get disciples, as it fareth with other sects."

So great is my horror at atheists, that I would neither reason *with* them nor about them; but surely they are as liable to conceit and vanity as other men are, and as proud of leading us captive to their opinions. I could wish the noble author had abstained from quoting Saint Bernard to prove the priesthood to have been, even in those days, more immoral than the laity; and I am shocked at hearing that "*learned times*," especially with peace and prosperity, tend toward atheism. Better blind ignorance, better war and pestilence and famine —

Barrow. Gently, gently! God may forgive his creature for not knowing him when he meets him; but less easily for fighting against him, after talking to him and supping with him; less easily for breaking his image, set up by him at every door, — and such is man; less easily for a series of fratricides, — and such is war.

Newton. I am wrong: and here again let me repeat the strange paradox of my visitor, rather than hazard another fault. In the words about *Superstition* he agreed that Bacon spoke wisely: —

"It were better to have no opinion of God at all, than such an opinion as is unworthy of him; for the one is unbelief, the other is contumely."

"And here," remarked my visitor, "it is impossible not to look back with wonder on the errors of some among the wisest men, following the drift of a distorted education, or resting on the suggestions of a splenetic disposition. I am no poet, and therefore am ill qualified to judge the merits of the late Mr. Milton in that capacity; yet, being of a serious and somewhat of a religious turn, I was shocked greatly more at his deity than at his devil. I know not what interest he could have in making Satan so august a creature, and so ready to share the dangers and sorrows of the angels he had seduced. I know not, on the other hand, what could have urged him to make the better ones so dastardly that, even at the voice of their Creator, not one among them offered his service to rescue from eternal perdition the last and weakest of intellectual beings. Even his own Son sat silent, and undertook the mission but slowly; although the trouble was momentary if compared with his everlasting duration, and the pain small if compared with his anterior and future bliss. Far be it from me," cried he —

Barrow. Did he cry so? — then I doubt whatever he said; for those are precisely the words that all your sanctified rogues begin their lies with. Well, let us hear however what he asserted.

Newton. "Far be it from me, Mr. Newton, to lessen the merits of our Divine Redeemer. I, on the contrary, am indignant that poets and theologians should frequently lean toward it."

Barrow. Did he look at all indignant?

Newton. He looked quite calm.

Barrow. Ha! I thought so. I doubt your friend's sincerity.

Newton. He is a very sincere man.

Barrow. So much the worse.

Newton. How?

Barrow. We will discourse another time upon this. I meant only, — what we may easily elucidate when we meet again. At present we have three-fourths of the volume to get through.

Newton. "Atheism leaves a man to sense, to philosophy, to natural piety, to laws, to reputation: all which may be guides to an outward moral virtue, though religion were not; but superstition dismounts all these, and erecteth an *absolute monarchy* in the minds of men: therefore atheism did never perturb States."

Again: "We see the times inclined to atheism . . . as the times of Augustus Cæsar . . . were civil times: but superstition hath been the confusion of many States."

I wish the noble author had kept to himself the preference he gives atheism over superstition; for, if it be just, as it seems to be, it follows that we should be more courteous and kind toward an atheist than toward a loose Catholic or rigid sectary.

Barrow. I see no reason why we should not be courteous and kind toward men of all persuasions, provided we are certain that neither by their own inclination nor by the instigation of another they would burn us alive to save our souls, or invade our conscience for the pleasure of carrying it with them at their girdles.

Atheism would make men have too little to do with others: superstition makes them wish to have too much. Atheism would make some fools: superstition makes many madmen. Atheism would oftener be in good humor than superstition is out of bad. I could bring many more and many stronger arguments in support of Bacon, and the danger would be little in adducing them; for the current runs violently in a contrary direction, and will have covered every thing with slime and sand before atheism can have her turn against it.

Newton. If *atheism did never perturb States*, as Bacon asserts, then nothing is more unjust than to punish it by the arm of the civil power. It was impolitic in him to remind the world that it was peaceful and happy for sixty years together, while those who ruled it were atheists; when we must acknowledge that it never has been happy or peaceful for so many days at a time, under the wisest and most powerful (as they call the present one) of the *Most Christian* kings. For if the observation and the fact be true, and if it also be true that the most rational aim of man is happiness, then must it follow that his most rational wish, — and, being his most rational, therefore his most innocent and laudable, — is the return of such times.

Barrow. We will go forward to the Essay *On Empire.*

Newton. I do not think the writer is correct in saying that "kings want matter of desire." Wherever there is vacuity of mind, there must either be flaccidity or craving; and this vacuity must necessarily be found in the greater part of princes, from the defects of their education, from the fear of offending them in its progress by interrogations and admonitions, from the habit of rendering all things valueless by the facility with which they are obtained, and transitory by the negligence with which they are received and holden.

"Princes many times make themselves desires, and set their hearts upon toys, — sometimes upon a building; sometimes upon erecting of an order; sometimes upon obtaining excellency in some art or feat of the hand."

On which my visitor said, "The latter desire is the least common among them. Whenever it does occur, it arises from idleness, and from the habitude of doing what they ought not. For, commendable as such exercises are in those who have no better and higher to employ their time in, they are unbecoming and injurious in kings; all whose hours, after needful recreation and the pleasures which all men share alike, should be occupied in taking heed that those under them perform their duties."

Barrow. Bacon lived in an age when the wisest men were chosen, from every rank and condition, for the administration of affairs. Wonderful is it that one mind on this subject should have pervaded all the princes in Europe, not excepting the Turk; and that we cannot point out a prime minister of any nation, at that period, deficient in sagacity or energy.*

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* There is a remark in a preceding Essay, which could not be noticed in the text: —

"As for the acquaintance which is to be sought in travel, that which is most of all profitable is acquaintance with the *secretaries and employed*

Yet that even the greatest, so much greater than any we have had since among us, did not come up to the standard he had fixed, is evident enough.

"The wisdom," says he, "of *all these latter times* in princes' affairs, is rather fine deliveries, and *shifting of dangers and mischiefs* when they are near, than solid and grounded courses to keep them aloof: but this is but to try masteries with fortune. And let men beware how they neglect and suffer matter of trouble to be prepared; for no man can forbid the spark, nor tell whence it may come."

Newton. Sir, it was on this passage that my friend exclaimed, "The true philosopher is the only true prophet. From the death of this, the brightest in both capacities, a few years opened the entire scroll of his awful predictions. Yet age after age will the same truths be disregarded, even though men of a voice as deep and a heart less hollow should repeat them. Base men must raise new families, though the venerable edifice of our Constitution be taken down for the abutments, and broken fortunes must be soldered in the flames of war blown up for the occasion."

On this subject he himself is too lax and easy. Among the reasons for legitimate war he reckons the *embracing of trade.* He seems unwilling to speak plainly, yet he means to signify that we may declare war against a nation for her prosperity; a prosperity raised by her industry, by the honesty of her dealings, and by excelling us in the quality of her commodity, in the exactness of workmanship, in punctuality, and in credit.

Barrow. Hell itself, with all its jealousy and malignity and falsehood, could not utter a sentence more pernicious to the interests and improvement of mankind. It is the duty of every State to provide and watch that not only no other in its vicinity, but that no other with which it has dealings immediate or remoter, do lose an inch of territory or a farthing of wealth by aggression. Princes fear at their next door rather the example of good than of bad. Correct your own

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men of embassadors; for so, in travelling in one country, he shall suck the experience of many."

This, whatever it may appear to us, was not ludicrous nor sarcastic when Bacon wrote it, but might be applied as well to the embassadors and secretaries of England as of other States.

ill habits, and you need not dread your rival's. Let him have them, and wear them every day, — if indeed a Christian may propose it, — and they will unfit him for competition with you.

Newton. I now come to the words *On Counsel:* "The doctrine of Italy, and practice of France, in some kings' times, hath introduced *cabinet counsels;* a remedy worse than the disease."

Cabinet — council! It does indeed seem a strange apposition. One would sooner have expected *cabinet cards* and *counters*, *cabinet miniature pictures*, — or what not!

Barrow. Isaac! if you had conversed, as I have, with some of those persons who constitute such councils, you would think the word *cabinet* quite as applicable to them as to cards or counters, or miniature pictures, or essences, or pots of pomatum.

Newton. How, then, in the name of wonder, are the great matters of government carried on?

Barrow. Great dinners are put upon the table, not by the entertainer, but by the waiters. There are usually some dexterous hands accustomed to the business. The same weights are moved by the same ropes and pulleys. There is no vast address required in hooking them, and no mighty strength in the hauling.

Newton. I have taken but few notes of some admirable things in my way to the Essay *On Cunning.*

Barrow. I may remind you hereafter of some omissions in other places.

Newton. I find Bacon no despiser of books in men of business, as people mostly are.

Barrow. Because they know little of them, and fancy they could manage the whole world by their genius. This is the commonest of delusions in the shallows of society. Well doth Bacon say, "There be that can pack the cards and yet cannot play well; so there are some that are good in canvasses and factions that are otherwise weak men."

Fortunate the country that is not the dupe of these intruders and bustlers, who often rise to the highest posts by their readiness to lend an arm at every stepping-stone in the dirt, and are found as convenient in their way as the candle-snuffers in gaming-houses, who have usually their *rouleau* at the service of the half-ruined.

Newton. I am sorry to find my Lord High Chancellor wearing as little the face of an honest man as doth one of these.

Barrow. How so?

Newton. He says, "If a man would cross a business, that he doubts some other would handsomely and effectually move, let him pretend to wish it well, and move it himself in such sort as may foil it."

What must I think of such counsel?

Barrow. Bacon, as I observed before, often forgets his character. Sometimes he speaks the language of truth and honesty, with more freedom than a better man could do safely; again, he teaches a lesson of baseness and roguery to the public, such as he could intend only for the private ear of some young statesman, before his rehearsal on the stage of politics. The words from the prompter's book have crept into the text, and injure the piece. Bacon might not have liked to cancel the directions he had given so much to his mind; instead of which, he draws himself up and cries austerely, "But these small wares and petty points of cunning are infinite, and it were a good deed to make a list of them; for nothing doth more hurt in a State than that cunning men pass for wise."

Newton. He has other things about wisdom in another place: "On the wisdom for a man's self."

Barrow. I must repeat one noble sentence; for I fear, if you begin to read it, I may interrupt you, not being master of my mind when his comes over it. "Divide with reason between self-love and society; and be so true to thyself as thou be not false to others, especially to thy king and country. It is a poor centre of a man's actions, himself: it is right earth; for that only stands fast upon his own centre; whereas all things that have affinity with the heavens move upon the centre of another, which they benefit."

What an imagination is Bacon's; what splendid and ardent language! In what prose-writer of our country, or of Rome, or of Greece, is there any thing equal or similar to it!

Newton. *On Innovations* I find the sentence which I have heard oftener quoted than any in the volume: "Time is the greatest innovator."

We take the axiom up without examination; it is doubtful and inconsiderate. Does it mean much time or little time? By a *great* innovator we must either signify an innovator in great matters, or in many at once, or nearly at once. Now time is slow in innovation of any kind; and all great innovations are violences, as it were, done to time, crowding into a small space what would in ordinary cases occupy a larger. Time, without other agents, would innovate little; for the portions of time are all the same, and, being so, their forces must be the same likewise.

Barrow. That satisfies me.

Newton. Truth and falsehood are the two great innovators, always at work, and sometimes the one uppermost and sometimes the other.

Barrow. Let us engage ourselves in the service of truth, where the service is not perilous; and let us win time to help us, for without him few cannot stand against many.

Newton. *On Friendship* there are some things which sit loose upon the subject. The *utility* of it seems to be principally in the view of Bacon. Some positions are questionable: —

"Certain it is that whosoever hath his mind fraught with many thoughts, his wits and understanding do clarify and break up in the communicating and discoursing with another; he tosseth his thoughts more easily; he marshalleth them more orderly; he seeth how they look when they are turned into words; finally, he waxeth wiser than himself, and that more by an hour's discourse than by a day's meditation."

This I conceive is applicable to one frame of mind, but not to another of equal capacity and elasticity. I admire the ingenuity of the thought, and the wording of it; nevertheless I doubt whether it suits not better the mind of an acute lawyer than of a contemplative philosopher. Never have I met with any one whose thoughts are *marshalled more orderly* in conversation than in composition; nor am I acquainted in the University with any gentleman of fluent speech, whose ideas are not frequently left dry upon the bank. Cicero and Demosthenes were laborious in composition, and their replies were, I doubt not, as much studied as their addresses. For it was a part of the orator to foresee the points of attack to which his oration was exposed, and to prepare the materials, and the arrangement of them, for defending it.

"It was well said by Themistocles to the king of Persia, that speech was like cloth of *Arras*," &c.

Themistocles might as well have spoken of velvet of Genoa and satin of Lyons.

On Expense there is much said quite worthy of Bacon's experience and prudence; but he lays down one rule which I think I can demonstrate to be injurious in its tendency: —

"If a man will keep but of even hand, his ordinary expenses ought to be but to the half of his receipts; and if he think to wax rich, but to the third part."

Should all private gentlemen, and others who are not gentlemen, but whose income is of the same value, spend only the third part of it, the nation would be more nearly ruined within the century, than it would be if every one of them mortgaged his property to half its amount.

A wiser saying comes soon afterward, where he speaks *On the True Greatness of Kingdoms and Estates*: —

"No people overcharged with tribute is fit for empire."

How happy, my dear sir, is our condition, in having been ever both generous and thrifty, ready at all times to succor the oppressed, and condescending on this holy occasion to ask the countenance of none! How happy, to have marched straight forward in the line of duty with no policy to thwart, no penury to enfeeble, and no debt to burthen us! Although our nobility is less magnificent than in the reign of the Tudors, I do verily believe it is as free and independent; and its hospitality, so conducive (as Bacon says) to martial greatness, is the same as ever, although the quality of the guests be somewhat changed.

Barrow. Isaac! are you serious?

Newton. Dear sir, the subject animates me.

Barrow. What sparkles is hardly more transparent than what is turbid. Your animation, my friend, perplexed me. I perceive you are vehemently moved by the glory of our country.

Newton. As we derive a great advantage from the nature of our nobility, so do we derive an equal one from the dispositions and occupations of the people. How unfortunate would it be for us, if we had artisans cooped up like tame pigeons in unwholesome lofts, bending over the loom by tallow-light, and refreshing their exhausted bodies at daybreak with ardent liquors! Indeed, in comparison with this, the use of slaves itself, which Bacon calls a great advantage, was almost a blessing.

Barrow. Let us not speculate on either of these curses, which may not be felt as such when they come upon us, for we shall be stunned and torpified by the greatness of our fall. What have you next?

Newton. *On Suspicion* I find an Italian proverb, which the learned author has misconstrued. "Sospetto licenzia fede" he translates, "Suspicion gives a passport to faith." The meaning is (my visitor tells me), "Suspicion dismisses fidelity." "Licenziare un servitore," is, *to dismiss a servant.* That the person suspected is no longer bound to fidelity, is the axiom of a nation in which fidelity is readier to quit a man than suspicion is.

It cost me many hours of inquiry to search into the propriety of his thoughts *Upon Ambition.* He says: "It is counted by some a weakness in princes to have favorites; but it is *of all others* the best remedy against ambitious great ones: for when the way of pleasuring and displeasuring lieth by the favorite, it is impossible any other should be overgreat."

I hope, and am willing to believe, that my Lord Chancellor Bacon was a true and loyal subject; yet one would almost be tempted to think, in reading him, that there must be a curse in hereditary princes, and that he had set his private mark upon it when he praises their use of favorites, and supposes them surrounded by mean persons and ambitious ones, by poisons and counterpoisons. Sejanus and Tigellinus, our Gavestons and Mortimers, our Empsons and Dudleys, our Wolseys and Buckinghams, are like certain fumigations to drive away rats; which indeed do drive them out, but also make the house undesirable to inhabit. He recommends "the continual interchange of favors and disgraces, whereby they may not know what to expect, and be, as it were, in a wood."

Barrow. By the effect of this policy, we find the countenances of the statesmen and courtiers who lived in his age, almost without exception, mean and suspicious. The greatest men look, in their portraits, as if they were waiting for a box on the ear; lowering their heads, raising their shoulders, and half-closing their eyes, for the reception of it.

Newton. What he says *Of nature in Men* seems spoken by some one who saw through it from above: the same *On Custom and Education*. Here he speaks with more verity than consolation, when he says: "There be not two more fortunate properties, than to have a little of the fool and not too much of the honest: therefore extreme lovers of their country were never fortunate; neither can they be; for when a man placeth his thoughts without himself, he goeth not his own way."

In the Essay *On Youth and Age*, what can be truer, what can be more novel or more eloquent, than this sentence: —

"Men of age object too much, consult too long, adventure too little, repent too soon, and seldom drive business home to the full period, but content themselves with a mediocrity of success."

What he says *Of Beauty* is less considerate.

Barrow. I do not wonder at it: beauty is not stripped in a Court of Chancery, as fortune is.

Newton. He is inconsequent in his reasoning when he says: "There is no excellent beauty that hath not some strangeness in the proportion. A man cannot tell whether Apelles or Albert Durer were the more trifler, *whereof* the one would make a personage by geometrical proportions; the other, by taking the best parts out of divers faces to make one excellent."

Barrow. *Whereof* is of *which*, not of *whom*.

Newton. If "there is no excellent beauty that hath not some strangeness in the proportion," then Apelles was no trifler in taking the best parts of *divers faces*, which would produce *some strangeness in the proportion* unless he corrected it.

Barrow. True: Bacon's first remark, however, is perfectly just and novel. What strikes us in beauty is that which we did not expect to find from any thing we had seen before: a new arrangement of excellent parts. The same thing may be said of genius, the other great gift of the Divinity, not always so acceptable to his creatures; but which however has this advantage, if you will allow it to be one, that, whereas beauty has most admirers at its first appearance, genius has most at its last, and begins to be commemorated in the period when the other is forgotten.

Newton. What you said of beauty, as striking us chiefly in being unexpected from any thing we had seen before, is applicable no less to ugliness.

Barrow. I am not giving a definition, but recording an observation, which would be inexact without the remaining words, — "*a new* arrangement of excellent parts."

Newton. Our author errs more widely than before; not, as before, in drawing a false conclusion. "Such personages," he continues to remark, "I think would please nobody but the painter who made them: not but I think a painter may make a better face than ever was; but he must do it by a kind of felicity (as a musician that maketh an excellent air in music) and not by rule." Nothing of excellent is to be done by felicity.

Barrow. Felicity and excellence rarely meet, and hardly know one another.

Newton. Certainly no musician ever composed *an excellent air* otherwise than by rule: felicity is without it.

Barrow. Beauty does not seem to dazzle but to deaden him. He reasons that the principal part of beauty lies in *decent motion*, and asserts that "no youthy person can be comely but by pardon, and by considering the youth as to make up the comeliness." Much of this reflection may have been fashioned and cast by the age of the observer; much by the hour of the day: I think it must have been a rainy morning, when he had eaten unripe fruit for breakfast!

Newton. Perhaps sour grapes.

On Deformity I have transcribed a long sentence: here he seems more at home: —

"Because there is in man an election touching the frame of his mind, and a necessity in the frame of his body, the stars of natural inclination are sometimes obscured by the sun of discipline and virtue; therefore it is good to consider of deformity, not as a sign which is most deceivable, but as a cause which seldom faileth of the effect."

Nothing can be truer in all its parts, or more magnificent in the whole.

Barrow. This short Essay is worth many libraries of good books. Several hundreds of esteemed authors have not in them the substance and spirit of the sentence you recited.

Newton. *On Building* he says: "Houses are built to live in, and not to look on."

Half of this is untrue. Sheds and hovels, the first habitations (at least the first artificial ones) of men, were built to live in, and not to look on; but houses are built for both: otherwise why give directions for the proportions of porticos, of columns, of intercolumniations, and of whatever else delights the beholder in architecture, and flatters the possessor? Is the beauty of cities no honor to the inhabitants, no excitement to the defence? External order in visible objects hath relation and intercourse with internal propriety and decorousness. I doubt not but the beauty of Athens had much effect on the patriotism, and some on the genius, of the Athenians. Part of the interest and animation men receive from Homer lies in their conception of the magnificence of Troy. Even the little rock of Ithaca rears up its palaces sustained by pillars; and pillars are that portion of an edifice on which the attention rests longest and most complacently. For we have no other means of calculating so well the grandeur of edifices, as by the magnitude of the support they need; and it is the only thing about them which we measure in any way by our own.

"Neither do I reckon it an ill seat only where the air is unwholesome, but likewise where the air is unequal: as you shall see many fine seats set upon a knap of ground, environed with higher hills round about it, whereby the heat of the sun is pent in, and the wind gathereth as in troughs," &c.

Now surely this very *knap of ground* is the very spot to be chosen for the commodiousness of its situation, its salubrity, and its beauty. There is as little danger of the wind gathering in these *troughs* as in goat-skins. He must have taken his idea from some Italian work: the remark is suitable only to a southern climate.

Barrow. In one so rainy as ours is, it would have been more judicious, I think, to have warned against building the house upon clay or marl, which are retentive of moisture, slippery nine months in the twelve, cracked the other three, of a color offensive to the sight, of a soil little accommodating to garden-plants, the water usually unwholesome, and the roads impassable.

Newton. On Negotiating I am sorry to find again our Lord Chancellor a dissembler and a tutor to lies: —

"To deal in person is good when a man's face breedeth regard, as commonly with inferiors; or in tender cases, where a man's eye upon the countenance of him with whom he speaketh may give him a direction how far to go; *and generally where a man will reserve to himself liberty, either to disavow or to expound.*"

Barrow. Bad enough: but surely he must appear to you any thing rather than knave, when he recommends *the employment of froward and absurd men*, be the business what it may.

Newton. He recommends them for *business which doth not well bear out itself;* and in which, one would think, the wariest are the most wanted.

Barrow. But, like men who have just tripped, he walks the firmer and stouter instantly. The remainder of the Essay is worthy of his perspicacity.

Newton. In the next, *On Followers and Friends*, I find the word *espial* used by him a second time, for a minister the French call *espion.* It appears to me that it should denote, not the *person* but the *action*, as the same termination is used in *trial.*

Barrow. Right. We want some words in composition as we want some side-dishes at table, less for necessity than for decoration. On this principle, I should not quarrel with a writer who had used the verb *originate;* on condition however that he used it as a neuter: none but a sugar-slave would employ it actively. It may stand opposite to *terminate.*

Bacon in the preceding sentence used *glorious* for *vainglorious;* a Latinism among the many of the age, and among the few of the author. Our language bears Gallicisms better than Latinisms; but whoever is resolved to write soberly must be contented with the number of each that was found among us in the time of the Reformation. Little is to be rejected of what was then in use, and less of any thing new is henceforward to be admitted. By which prudence and caution we may in time have writers as elegant as the Italian and the French, whom already we exceed, as this little volume proves, in vigor and invention.

Newton. He says, further on: "It is true that in government it is good to use men of one rank equally; for to countenance some extraordinarily is to make them insolent, and the rest discontent, because they may claim a due: but contrariwise in favor, to use men with much difference and election is good; for it maketh the persons preferred more thankful, and the rest more officious; because all is of favor."

Here again I am sorry so great an authority should, to use the words of my visitor, let his conscience run before his judgment, and his tongue slip in between. "In saying that all is of favor" (thus carps my visitor) "he gives a preference to another form of government over the monarchal; another form indeed where all is not of favor; where something may be attributed to virtue, something to industry, something to genius; where something may accrue to us from the gratitude of our fellow-citizens; and not every thing drop and drivel from the frothy pulings of one swathed up in bandages never changed nor loosened; of one held always in the same arms, and with its face turned always in the same direction."

Barrow. Hold! hold! this is as bad as Bacon or Milton: nay, Cicero and Demosthenes, in the blindness of their hearts, could scarcely have spoken, to the nations they guided, with more contemptuous asperity of royal power.

Newton. I venerate it, as coming of God.

Barrow. Hold again! all things come from him: the hangman and the hanged are in the same predicament with the anointer and the anointed.

Newton. Sir, you remind me of an observation made in my father's house by the son of a republican, and who indeed was little better than one himself. My father had upbraided him on his irreverence to the Lord's anointed: he asked my father why he allowed his mind to be lime-twigged and ruffled and discomposed by words; and whether he would feel the same awe in repeating the syllables, *God's greased*, as in repeating the syllables, *God's anointed.* If the Esquimaux heard them, said he, they would think the man no better reared than themselves, and worse dressed, as dressed by one less in practice.

Barrow. No men are so facetious as those whose minds are somewhat perverted. Truth enjoys good air and clear light, but no play-ground. Keep your eyes upon Bacon: we may more safely look on him than on thrones. How wise is all the remainder of the Essay!

Newton. He says, *On Suitors*, and truly, that "Private suits do putrefy the public good." Soon afterward, "Some embrace suits *which* never mean to deal effectually in them."

This seems ordinary and flat; but the words are requisite to a sentence founded (I fear) on a close observation of human nature, as courts render it. I noted them as presenting an incorrectness and indecision of language. *Who* is proper, not *which;* although *which* was used indiscriminately, as we find in the beginning of the "Lord's Prayer:" but in that place there could be no confusion.

Barrow. Among the few crudities and barbarisms that yet oppressed our language in his learned age, Bacon has this, "A man *were better rise* in his suit." Indeed, he uses *were better* more than once; with the simple verb after it, and without *to.*

Newton. *On Studies* he cannot lose his road, having trodden it so frequently, and having left his mark upon so many objects all the way. Therefore it is no wonder that his genius points with a finger of fire to this subject.

He says, *On Faction*, that, "Many a man's strength is in opposition, and when that faileth he groweth out of use." He must have written from inspiration; for in his age I find no person to whom he can have alluded.

Barrow. Perhaps not; yet the preceding may have furnished him with examples.

Newton. In the first sentence *On Ceremonies and Respects* are the words, "He that is only real had need have exceeding great parts of virtue." This weighty and sorrowful truth does not prevent me from questioning the expression, *had need have.*

Barrow. The true words, which all authors write amiss, are, *ha'* need *of. Ha' need* sounds like *had need*, and *have* sounds like *of*, in speaking quickly. Hence the wisest men have written the words improperly, by writing at once from the ear without an appeal or reference to grammar.

Newton. *On Praise* he says ingeniously, but not altogether truly, "Fame is like a river, that beareth up things light and swollen, and drowns things weighty and solid."

Barrow. This is true only of literary fame; and the drowned things are brought to light again, sometimes by the warmer season and sometimes by the stormier.

He uses *suspect* for *suspicion:* we retain *aspect*, *respect*, *retrospect*, *prospect.* I know not whether the chancellor's award in favor of *suspect* will be repealed or acquiesced in.

Newton. In the next Essay, *On Vain-glory*, he says: "In fame of learning the flight will be slow without some feathers of ostentation." That is hard, if true.

Barrow. There must be a good deal of movement and shuffling before there is any rising from the ground; and those who have the longest wings have the most difficulty in the first mounting. In literature, as at foot-ball, strength and agility are insufficient of themselves: you must have your *side*, or you may run till you are out of breath, and kick till you are out of shoes, and never win the game. There must be some to keep others off you, and some to prolong for you the ball's rebound. But your figures, dear Isaac, will serve as tenterhooks to catch the fingers of those who would meddle with your letters. Do not however be ambitious of an early fame: such is apt to shrivel and to drop under the tree.

Newton. The author continues the same subject in the next Essay, though under a different title. *Of Honor and Reputation* he says, "Discreet followers and servants help much to reputation." Then he who has no servant, or an indiscreet one, must be content to be helped to little of it.

Barrow. Seeing that reputation is casual, that the wise may long want it, that the unwise may soon acquire it, that a servant may further it, that a spiteful man may obstruct it, that a passionate man may maim it, and that whole gangs are ready to waylay it as it mounts the hill, — I would not wish greatly to carry it about me, but rather to place it in some safe spot, where few could find, and not many will look after it. But those who discover it will try in their hands its weight and quality, and take especial care lest they injure it, saying, "It is his and his only; leave it to him, and wish him increase in it."

Newton. Where Bacon is occupied "in the true marshalling of sovran honor," he gives the third place to *liberatores* or *salvatores*. He wishes to speak in Latin; one of these words belongs not to the language.

Barrow. His Latin is always void of elegance and grace; but he had the generosity to write in it, that he might be useful the more extensively. We English are far below the Italians, French, Germans, and Dutch in our Latinity; yet we have Latin volumes written by our countrymen, each of which, in its matter, is fairly worth half theirs. They, like certain fine gentlemen, seem to found their ideas of elegance on slenderness, and in twenty or thirty of them we hardly find a thought or remark at all worthy of preservation. I remember but one sentence; which however, if Cicero had written it, would be recorded among the best he ever wrote. "Valuit nimirum maledicentiâ, gratâ cunctis, etiam iis qui neque sibi maledici neque maledicere ipsi aliis velint."

Newton. Permit me to inquire, sir, by whom was this strong and shrewd and truly Sallustian sentence written?

Barrow. By Vavassor, a Jesuit.

It may be remarked, and perhaps you have done it, that the title itself of this Essay, *The True Marshalling of sovran Honor*, is incorrect. By *marshalling* he means *the giving of rates or degrees;* now what is *sovran* has no rates or degrees: he should have said "of titles assumed by sovran princes."

Newton. In the first sentence *On Judicature*, he uses the singular and plural in designating the same body: either is admissible, but not both: —

"Else will it be like the authority claimed by the Church of Rome, which, under pretext of exposition of Scripture, *doth* not stick to add and alter, and to pronounce that which *they* do not find, and, by show of antiquity, to introduce novelty."

What gravity and wisdom is there in the remark that, "One foul sentence doth more hurt than many foul examples: for these do but corrupt the stream, the other corrupteth the fountain."

The worst, and almost the only bad, sentence in the volume is the childish antithesis, "There be, saith the Scripture, that turn judgment into wormwood . . . and surely there be also that turn it into vinegar: for injustice maketh it bitter, and delays make it sour."

On the Vicissitudes of Things he observes that "the true religion is built upon the rock, the rest are tossed upon the waves of time." My visitor said hereupon: "I doubt whether this magnificent figure has truth for its basis. If by true religion is meant the religion of our Saviour, as practised by his apostles, they outlived it. They complain that it never took firm possession even of their own auditors. Saint Peter himself was reproved by his master for using his sword too vigorously, after all he had said against any use of it whatever; yet, so little good did the reproof, he fell immediately to betraying the very man he had thus defended. But if by true religion we mean the Church of Rome, we come nearer the fact; for that religion, with patchings and repairings, with materials purloined from others, with piles driven under the foundation, and buttresses without that darken every thing within, surmounted by pinnacles raised above the upper story, hath lasted long, and will remain while men are persuaded that wax and stockfish can atone for their vices. The obstacle to our acceptance of the meaning is that it hath been convicted of many impostures in its claims and miracles, that it continues to insist on them, and that it uses violence (which is forbidden by Christ) against those who stumble or doubt."

Barrow. Deafness is not to be healed by breaking the head, nor blindness by pulling the eyes out: it is time the doctors should try new experiments; if they will not, it is time that the patients should try new doctors.

Newton. A bad religion may be kept afoot by the same means as other kinds of bad government; by corruption and terror, by spies and torturers. No doubt it will please God to see all things set to rights; but we must acknowledge that the best religion, like the best men, has fared the worst.

Bacon says he "reckons martyrdoms among miracles, because they *seem* to exceed the strength of human nature." If they did *seem* to exceed the strength of human nature, this is no sufficient reason why they should be ranked with miracles; for martyrdoms have appertained to many religions, if we may call voluntary death to prove a misbeliever's sincerity a martyrdom, while we know that miracles belong exclusively to the Christian: and even in this faith there are degrees of latitude and longitude which they were never known to pass, although, humanly speaking, they were much wanted. The Lithuanians, and other north-eastern nations, were long before they were reclaimed from paganism, for want of miracles. God's good time had not come: and he fell upon different expedients for their conversion.

On the Vicissitudes of Things we find mention of Plato's great year. I think you once told me, Plato took more from others than he knew what to do with.

Barrow. Instead of simplifying, he involves and confounds.

Newton. I hope hereafter to study the heavenly bodies with greater accuracy and on other principles than philosophers have done hitherto. The reasons of Bacon why "the northern tract of the world is the more martial region" are unworthy of his perspicacity. First, he assigns the stars of the hemisphere; then, the greatness of the continent, "whereas the south part is almost all sea;" then, the cold of the northern parts, "which is that which, without aid of discipline, doth make the bodies hardest and the courage warmest." The stars can have no effect whatever on the courage or virtues of men, unless we call the sun one of them, as the poets do. The heat of the sun may produce effeminacy and sloth in many constitutions, and contrary effects in many; but I suspect that dryness and moisture are more efficient on the human body than heat and cold. Some races, as in dogs and horses and cattle of every kind, are better than others, and do not lose their qualities for many ages, nor, unless others cross them, without the confluence of many causes. There may be as much courage in hot climates as in cold. The inhabitants of Madagascar and Malacca are braver than the Laplanders, and perhaps not less brave than the Londoners. The fact is this: people in warm climates are in the full enjoyment of all the pleasures that animal life affords, and are disinclined to toil after that which no toil could produce or increase; while the native of the north is condemned by climate to a life of labor, which oftentimes can procure for him but a scanty portion of what his vehement and exasperated appetite demands. Therefore he cuts it short with his sword, and reaps the field sown by the southern.

Bacon seems to me just in his opinion, if not that *ordnance*, at least that inflammable powder and annoyance by its means, perhaps in rockets, was known among the ancients. He instances the Oxydraces in India. The remark is, I imagine, equally applicable to the priests of Delphi, who repelled the Gauls with it from the temple of Apollo. This is the more remarkable, as the Persians too encountered the same resistance, and experienced the double force of *thunderbolts and earthquake.* Whence we may surmise that not only missiles, propelled by the combustion of powder, were aimed against them, but likewise that mines exploded. And perhaps other priests, the only people in most places who formerly had leisure for experiments, were equally acquainted with it, and used it for their own defence only, and only in cases of extremity. Etruscan soothsayers were appointed to blast the army of Alaric with lightning, and the Pope acceded to the proposal; but his Holiness, on reflection, was of opinion that *aurum fulminans* was more effectual.

I wish the Essay *On Fame* had been completed: and even then its chief effect on me, perhaps, would be to excite another wish; as gratification usually does. It would have made me sigh for the recovery of Cicero *On Glory*, that the two greatest of philosophers might be compared on the same ground.

Barrow. Let us look up at Fame without a desire or a repining; and let us pardon all her falsehoods and delays, in remembrance that the best verse in Homer, and the best in Virgil, are on her. Virgil's is indeed but a feather from the wing of Homer.

Newton. You show a very forgiving mind, sir, and I hope she will be grateful to you. I do not know what these lines are worth, as they give me no equations.

Barrow. Nothing should be considered quite independently of every thing else. We owe reverence to all great writers; but our reverence to one would be injustice to another, unless we collated and compared their merits.

Newton. Some are so dissimilar to others, that I know not how it can be done.

Barrow. Liquids and solids are dissimilar, yet may be weighed in the same scales. All things are composed of portions; and all things bear proportions relatively, — mind to mind, matter to matter. Archimedes and Homer are susceptible of comparison; but the process would be long and tedious, the principles must be sought from afar, nor is the man perhaps at the next door who must be called for the operation. Bacon and Milton, Bacon and Shakspeare, may be compared with little difficulty, wide asunder as they appear to stand. However, since the cogitative and imaginative parts of mind are exercised by both in broad daylight and in open spaces, the degrees in which they are exercised are within our calculation. Until we bring together the weightiest works of genius from the remotest distances, we shall display no admirable power of criticism. None such hath been hitherto exhibited in the world, which stands in relation to criticism as it stood in relation to metaphysics, until the time of Aristoteles. He left them imperfect; and they have lain little better ever since. The good sense of Cicero led him to clearer studies and wholesomer exercise; and where he could not pluck fruit he would not pluck brambles. In Plato we find only arbors and grottos, with moss and shell-work all misplaced. Aristoteles hath built a solider edifice, but hath built it across our road: we must throw it down again, and use what we can of the materials elsewhere.

Newton. Bacon, seen only in his *Essays*, would have appeared to me (fresh as I come from the study of the ancients, and captivated as I confess I am by the graces of their language) the wisest and most instructive of writers.

Barrow. In calling him the wisest of writers, you must except those who wrote from inspiration.

Newton. Ha! that is quite another thing.

Barrow. Henceforward I would advise you to follow the bent of your genius, in examining those matters principally which are susceptible of demonstration. Every young man should have some proposed end for his studies: let yours be philosophy; and principally those parts of it in which the ancients have done little and the moderns less. And never be dejected, my dear Isaac, though it should enable you to throw but a scarcity of light on the *Revelation*, *The Rape of Helen*, and *The Golden Fleece.*

Newton. I hope by my labors I may find a clew to them in the process of time. But perhaps my conjectures may turn out wrong, as those on the book before me have.

Barrow. How?

Newton. I should always have imagined, if you had not taught me the contrary, that there is more of genius and philosophy in Bacon's *Essays* than in all Cicero's works, however less there be of the scholastic and oratorical. Perhaps I, by being no estimator of style —

Barrow. Peace, peace! my modest Newton! Perhaps I, by being too much an estimator of it, have overvalued the clearest head and the purest tongue of antiquity. My Lord Justice Coke, and probably the more learned Selden, would have ridiculed or reproved us, had we dared entertain in their presence a doubt of Cicero's superiority over Bacon. No very great man ever reached the standard of his greatness in the crowd of his contemporaries. This hath always been reserved for the secondary. There must either be something of the vulgar, something in which the commonalty can recognize their own features, or there must be a laxity, a jealousy, an excitement stimulating a false appetite. Your brief review of the *Essays* hath brought back to my recollection so much of shrewd judgment, so much of rich imagery, such a profusion of truths so plain, as (without his manner of exhibiting them) to appear almost unimportant that, in the various high qualities of the human mind, I must acknowledge not only Cicero, but every prose-writer among the Greeks, to stand far below him. Cicero is least valued for his highest merits, his fulness and his perspicuity. Bad judges (and how few are not so!) desire in composition the concise and the obscure, not knowing that the one most frequently arises from paucity of materials, and the other from inability to manage and dispose them. Have you never observed that, among the ignorant in painting, dark pictures are usually called the finest in the collection, and graybearded heads, fit only for the garret, are preferred to the radiance of light and beauty? Have you yourself never thought, before you could well measure and calculate, that books and furniture thrown about a room appeared to be in much greater quantities than when they were arranged? At every step we take to gain the approbation of the wise, we lose something in the estimation of the vulgar. Look within: cannot we afford it?

The minds of few can take in the whole of a great author, and fewer can draw him close enough to another for just commensuration. A fine passage may strike us less forcibly than one beneath it in beauty, from less sensibility in us at the moment; whence less enthusiasm, less quickness of perception, less capacity, less hold. You have omitted to remark some of the noblest things in Bacon, often I believe because there is no power of judgment to be shown in the expression of admiration, and perhaps too sometimes from the repetition and intensity of delight.

Newton. Sir, I forbore to lift up my hands as a mark of admiration. You ordered me to demonstrate, if I could, the defects of this wonderful man, unnoticed hitherto.

Barrow. You have done it to my satisfaction. Cicero disdained not in the latter days of his life, when he was highest in reputation and dignity, to perform a similar office in regard to Epicurus: and I wish he had exhibited the same accuracy and attention, the same moderation and respect. The objections of your friend and visitor are not altogether frivolous: take care however lest he, by his disceptations, move you from your faith. If you hold the faith, the faith will support you; as, if you make your bed warm by lying in it, your bed will keep you so: never mind what the ticking or the wadding may be made of. There are few things against which I see need to warn you, and not many on which you want advice. You are not profuse in your expenditure; yet as you, like most of the studious, are inattentive to money-affairs, let me guard you against evils following on this negligence, worse than the negligence itself. Whenever a young man is remarked for it, a higher price is fixed on what he purchases; and dishonest men of every description push themselves into his service, and often acquire his confidence, not only to the injury of his fortune, but likewise of his credit and respectability. Let a gentleman be known to have been cheated of twenty pounds, and it costs him forty a-year for the remainder of his life. Therefore, if you detect the cheat, the wisest thing is to conceal it; both for fear of the rogues about your sideboard, and of those more dexterous ones round the green cloth, under the judge, in your county assize-room.

You will become an author ere long; and every author must attend to the means of conveying his information. The plainness of your style is suitable to your manners and your studies. Avoid, which many grave men have not done, words taken from sacred subjects and from elevated poetry: these we have seen vilely prostituted. Avoid too the society of the barbarians who misemploy them: they are vain, irreverent, and irreclaimable to right feelings. The dialogues of Galileo, which you have been studying, are written with much propriety and precision. I do not urge you to write in dialogue, although the best writers of every age have done it; the best parts of Homer and Milton are speeches and replies; the best parts of every great historian are the same: the wisest men of Athens and of Rome converse together in this manner, as they are shown to us by Xenophon, by Plato, and by Cicero. Whether you adopt such a form of composition, — which, if your opinions are new, will protect you in part from the hostility all novelty (unless it is vicious) excites, — or whether you choose to go along the unbroken surface of the didactic, never look abroad for any kind of ornament. Apollo, either as the god of day or the slayer of Python, had nothing about him to obscure his clearness or to impede his strength. To one of your mild manners, it would be superfluous to recommend equanimity in competition, and calmness in controversy. How easy is it for the plainest things to be misinterpreted by men not unwise, which a calm disquisition sets right! — and how fortunate and opportune is it to find in ourselves that calmness which almost the wisest have wanted, on urgent and grave occasions! If others for a time are preferred to you, let your heart lie sacredly still; and you will hear from it the true and plain oracle, that not for ever will the magistracy of letters allow the rancid transparencies of coarse colormen to stand before your propylæa. It is time that Philosophy should have her share in our literature; that the combinations and appearances of matter be scientifically considered and luminously displayed. Frigid conceits on theological questions, heaps of snow on barren crags, compose at present the greater part of our domain: volcanoes of politics burst forth from time to time, and vary, without enlivening, the scene.

Do not fear to be less rich in the productions of your mind at one season than at another. Marshes are always marshes, and pools are pools; but the sea, in those places where we admire it most, is sometimes sea and sometimes dry land; sometimes it brings ships into port, and sometimes it leaves them where they can be refitted and equipped. The capacious mind neither rises nor sinks, neither labors nor rests, in vain. Even in those intervals when it loses the consciousness of its powers, when it swims as it were in vacuity, and feels not what is external nor internal, it acquires or recovers strength, as the body does by sleep. Never try to say things admirably; try only to say them plainly; for your business is with the considerate philosopher, and not with the polemical assembly. If a thing can be demonstrated two ways, demonstrate it in both: one will please this man best, the other that; and pleasure, if obvious and unsought, is never to be neglected by those appointed from above to lead us into knowledge. Many will readily mount stiles and gates to walk along a footpath in a field, whom the very sight of a bare public road would disincline and weary; and yet the place whereto they travel lies at the end of each. Your studies are of a nature unsusceptible of much decoration: otherwise it would be my duty and my care to warn you against it, not merely as idle and unnecessary, but as obstructing your intent. The fond of wine are little fond of the sweet or of the new: the fond of learning are no fonder of its must than of its dregs. Something of the severe hath always been appertaining to order and to grace; and the beauty that is not too liberal is sought the most ardently and loved the longest. The Graces have their zones, and Venus her cestus. In the writings of the philosopher are the frivolities of ornament the most ill-placed; in you would they be particularly, who, promising to lay open before us an infinity of worlds, should turn aside to display the petals of a double pink.

It is dangerous to have any intercourse or dealing with small authors. They are as troublesome to handle, as easy to discompose, as difficult to pacify, and leave as unpleasant marks on you, as small children. Cultivate on the other hand the society and friendship of the higher; first, that you may learn to reverence them, which of itself is both a pleasure and a virtue; and then, that on proper occasions you may defend them against the malevolent, which is a duty. And this duty cannot be well and satisfactorily performed with an imperfect knowledge, or with an inadequate esteem. Habits of respect to our superiors are among the best we can attain, if we only remove from our bosom the importunate desire of unworthy advantages from them. They belong to the higher department of justice, and will procure for us in due time our portion of it. Beside, O Isaac! in this affair our humanity is deeply concerned. Think how gratifying, how consolatory, how all-sufficient, are the regards and attentions of such wise and worthy men as you to those whom inferior but more powerful ones, some in scarlet, some in purple, some (it may be) in ermine, vilify or neglect! Many are there to whom we are now indifferent, or nearly, whom, if we had approached them as we ought to have done, we should have cherished, loved, and honored. Let not this reflection, which on rude and unequal minds may fall without form and features and pass away like the idlest cloud-shadow, be lost on you. Old literary men, beside age and experience, have another quality in common with Nestor: they, in the literature of the country, are praisers of times past, partly from moroseness, and partly from custom and conviction. The illiterate, on the contrary, raise higher than the steeples, and dress up in the gaudiest trim, a maypole of their own, and dance round it while any rag flutters. So tenacious are Englishmen of their opinions, that they would rather lose their franchises and almost their lives. And this tenacity hath not its hold upon letters only, but likewise upon whatever is public. I have witnessed it in men guilty of ingratitude, of fraud, of peculation, of prevarication, of treachery to friends, of insolence to patrons, of misleading of colleagues, of abandonment of party, of renunciation of principles, of arrogance to honester men and wiser, of humiliation to strumpets for the obtainment of place and profit, of every villany in short which unfits not only for the honors of public, but rejects from the confidence of private, life. And there have been people so maddened by faction, that they would almost have erected a monument to such persons, hoping to spite and irritate their adversaries, and unconscious or heedless that the inscription must be their own condemnation. Those who have acted in this manner will repent of it; but they will hate you for ever if you foretell them of their repentance. It is not the fact nor the consequence, it is the motive, that turns and pinches them; and they would think it straightforward and natural to cry out against you, and a violence and a malady to cry out against themselves. The praises they have given they will maintain, and more firmly than if they were due; as perjurers stick to perjury more hotly than the veracious to truth. Supposing there should be any day of your life unoccupied by study, there will not be one without an argument why parties, literary or political, should be avoided. You are too great to be gregarious; and were you to attempt it, the gregarious in a mass would turn their heads against you. The greater who enter into public life are disposed at last to quit it: *retirement with dignity* is their device; the meaning of which is, retirement with as much of the public property as can be amassed and carried away. This race of great people is very numerous. I want before I die to see one or two ready to believe, and to act on the belief, that there is as much dignity in retiring soon as late, with little as with loads, with quiet minds and consciences as with ulcerated or discomposed. I have already seen some hundred sectaries of that pugnacious pope, who, being reminded that Christ commanded Peter to put up his sword, replied, "Yes, when he had cut the ear off."

To be in right harmony, the soul not only must be never out of time, but must never lose sight of the theme its Creator's hand hath noted.

Why are you peeping over your forefinger into those pages near the beginning of the volume?

Newton. I have omitted the notice of several Essays.

Barrow. There are many that require no observation for peculiarities; though perhaps there is not one that any other man could have written.

Newton. I had something more, sir, to say — or rather — I had something more, sir, to ask — about Friendship.

Barrow. All men, but the studious above all, must beware in the formation of it. Advice or caution on this subject comes immaturely and ungracefully from the young, exhibiting a proof either of temerity or suspicion; but when you hear it from a man of my age, who has been singularly fortunate in the past, and foresees the same felicity in those springing up before him, you may accept it as the direction of a calm observer, telling you all he has remarked on the greater part of a road which he has nearly gone through, and which you have but just entered. Never take into your confidence, or admit often into your company, any man who does not know, on some important subject, more than you do. Be his rank, be his virtues, what they may, he will be a hindrance to your pursuits, and an obstruction to your greatness. If indeed the greatness were such as courts can bestow, and such as can be laid on the shoulders of a groom and make him look like the rest of the company, my advice would be misplaced; but since all transcendent, all true and genuine greatness must be of a man's own raising, and only on the foundation that the hand of God has laid, do not let any touch it: keep them off civilly, but keep them off. Affect no stoicism; display no indifference: let their coin pass current; but do not you exchange for it the purer ore you carry, nor think the milling pays for the alloy. Greatly favored and blessed by Providence will you be, if you should in your lifetime be known for what you are: the contrary, if you should be transformed.

Newton. Better and more decorous would it be perhaps, if I filled up your pause with my reflections: but you always have permitted me to ask you questions; and now, unless my gratitude misleads me, you invite it.

Barrow. Ask me any thing: I will answer it, if I can; and I will pardon you, as I have often done, if you puzzle me.

Newton. Is it not a difficult and a painful thing to repulse, or to receive ungraciously, the advances of friendship?

Barrow. It withers the heart, if indeed his heart were ever sound who doth it. Love, serve, run into danger, venture life, for him who would cherish you: give him every thing but your time and your glory. Morning recreations, convivial meals, evening walks, thoughts, questions, wishes, wants, partake with him. Yes, Isaac! there are men born for friendship; men to whom the cultivation of it is nature, is necessity, as the making of honey is to bees. Do not let them suffer for the sweets they would gather; but do not think to live upon those sweets. Our corrupted state requires robuster food, or must grow more and more unsound.

Newton. I would yet say something; a few words; on this subject — or one next to it.

Barrow. *On Expense* then: that is the next. I have given you some warning about it, and hardly know what else to say. Cannot you find the place?

Newton. I had it under my hand. If — that is, provided — your time, sir! —

Barrow. Speak it out, man! Are you in a ship of Marcellus under the mirror of Archimedes, that you fume and redden so? Cry to him that you are his scholar, and went out only to parley.

Newton. Sir! in a word — ought a studious man to think of matrimony?

Barrow. Painters, poets, mathematicians, never ought: other studious men, after reflecting for twenty years upon it, may. Had I a son of your age, I would not leave him in a grazing country. Many a man hath been safe among cornfields, who falls a victim on the grass under an elm. There are lightnings very fatal in such places.

Newton. Supposing me no mathematician, I must reflect then for twenty years!

Barrow. Begin to reflect on it after the twenty; and continue to reflect on it all the remainder: I mean at intervals, and quite leisurely. It will save to you many prayers, and may suggest to you one thanksgiving.

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XVI. WALTON, COTTON, AND OLDWAYS.

Walton. God be with thee and preserve thee, old Ashbourne! Thou art verily the pleasantest place upon his earth; I mean from May-day till Michaelmas. Son Cotton, let us tarry a little here upon the bridge. Did you ever see greener meadows than these on either hand? And what says that fine lofty spire upon the left, a trowling-line's cast from us? It says methinks, "Blessed be the Lord for this bounty: come hither and repeat it beside me." How my jade winces! I wish the strawberry-spotted trout, and ash-colored grayling under us, had the bree that plagues thee so, my merry wench! Look, my son, at the great venerable house opposite. You know these parts as well as I do, or better; are you acquainted with the worthy who lives over there?

Cotton. I cannot say I am.

Walton. You shall be then. He has resided here forty-five years, and knew intimately our good Doctor Donne, and (I hear) hath some of his verses, written when he was a stripling or little better, the which we come after.

Cotton. That, I imagine, must be he! — the man in black, walking above the house.

Walton. Truly said on both counts. Willy Oldways, sure enough; and he doth walk above his house-top. The gardens here, you observe, overhang the streets.

Cotton. Ashbourne, to my mind, is the prettiest town in England.

Walton. And there is nowhere between Trent and Tweed a sweeter stream for the trout, I do assure you, than the one our horses are bestriding. Those, in my opinion, were very wise men who consecrated certain streams to the Muses: I know not whether I can say so much of those who added the mountains. Whenever I am beside a river or rivulet on a sunny day, and think a little while, and let images warm into life about me, and joyous sounds increase and multiply in their innocence, the sun looks brighter and feels warmer, and I am readier to live, and less unready to die.

Son Cotton! these light idle brooks,
Peeping into so many nooks,
Yet have not for their idlest wave
The leisure you may think they have:
No, not the little ones that run
And hide behind the first big stone,
When they have squirted in the eye
Of their next neighbor passing by;
Nor yonder curly sideling fellow
Of tones than Pan's own flute more mellow,
Who learns his tune and tries it over
As girl who fain would please her lover.
Something has each of them to say;
He says it and then runs away,
And says it in another place,
Continuing the unthrifty chase.
We have as many tales to tell,
And look as gay and run as well,
But leave another to pursue
What we had promised we would do;
Till in the order God has fated,
One after one precipitated,
Whether we *would* on, or would *not* on,
Just like these idle waves, son Cotton!

And now I have taken you by surprise, I will have (finished or unfinished) the verses you snatched out of my hand, and promised me another time, when you awoke this morning.

Cotton. If you must have them, here they are.

Walton (*reads*).

Rocks under Okeover park-paling
Better than Ashbourne suit the grayling.
Reckless of people springs the trout,
Tossing his vacant head about,

And his distinction-stars, as one
Not to be touched but looked upon,
And smirks askance, as who should say
"I'd lay now (if I e'er *did* lay)
The brightest fly that shines above,
You know not what *I'm* thinking of;
What *you* are, I can plainly tell,
And so, my gentles, fare ye well!"

Heigh! heigh! what have we here? — a double hook with a bait upon each side. Faith! son Cotton, if my friend Oldways had seen these, — not the verses I have been reading, but these others I have run over in silence, — he would have reproved me, in his mild amicable way, for my friendship with one who, at two-and-twenty, could either know so much or invent so much about a girl. He remarked to me, the last time we met, that our climate was more backward and our youth more forward than anciently; and, taking out a newspaper from under the cushion of his arm-chair, showed me a paragraph, with a cross in red ink, and seven or eight marks of admiration, — some on one side, some on the other, — in which there was mention made of a female servant, who, hardly seventeen years old, charged her master's son, who was barely two older —

Cotton. Nonsense! nonsense! impossible!

Walton. Why, he himself seemed to express a doubt; for beneath was written, "Qu., if perjured — which God forbid! May all turn out to his glory!"

Cotton. But really I do not recollect that paper of mine, if mine it be, which appears to have stuck against the Okeover-paling lines.

Walton. Look! they are both on the same scrap. Truly, son, there are girls here and there who might have said as much as thou, their proctor, hast indicted for them: they have such froward tongues in their heads, some of them. A breath keeps them in motion, like a Jew's harp, God knows how long. If you do not or will not recollect the verses on this indorsement, I will read them again, and aloud.

Cotton. Pray do not balk your fancy.

Walton (*reads*).

Where 's my apron? I will gather
Daffodils and kingcups, rather

Than have fifty silly souls,
False as cats and dull as owls,
Looking up into my eyes
And half-blinding me with sighs.

Cats, forsooth! *Owls*, and cry you mercy! Have they no better words than those for civil people? Did any young woman really use the expressions, bating the metre, or can you have contrived them out of pure likelihood?

Cotton. I will not gratify your curiosity at present.

Walton. Anon, then.

Here I stretch myself along,
Tell a tale or sing a song,
By my cousin Sue or Bet —
And, for dinner here I get
Strawberries, curds, or what I please,
With my bread upon my knees;
And, when I have had enough,
Shake, and off to *blind-man's-buff.*

Spoken in the character of a maiden, it seems, who little knows, in her innocence, that *blind-man's-buff* is a perilous game.

You are looking, I perceive, from off the streamlet toward the church. In its chancel lie the first and last of the Cockaynes. Whole races of men have been exterminated by war and pestilence; families and names have slipped down and lost themselves by slow and imperceptible decay: but I doubt whether any breed of fish, with heron and otter and angler in pursuit of it, hath been extinguished since the Heptarchy. They might humble our pride a whit, methinks, though they hold their tongues. The people here entertain a strange prejudice against the *nine-eyes.*

Cotton. What, in the name of wonder, is that?

Walton. At your years, do not you know? It is a tiny kind of lamprey, a finger long; it sticketh to the stones by its sucker, and, if you are not warier and more knowing than folks in general from the South, you might take it for a weed: it wriggles its whole body to and fro so regularly, and is of that dark color which subaqueous weeds are often of, as though they were wet through; which they are not any more than land-weeds, if one may believe young Doctor Plott, who told me so in confidence.

Hold my mare, son Cotton. I will try whether my whip can reach the window, when I have mounted the bank.

Cotton. Curious! the middle of a street to be lower than the side by several feet. People would not believe it in London or Hull.

Walton. Ho! lass! tell the good parson, your master, or his wife if she be nearer at hand, that two friends would dine with him: Charles Cotton, kinsman of Mistress Cotton of the Peak, and his humble servant, Izaak Walton.

Girl. If you are come, gentles, to dine with my master, I will make another kidney-pudding first, while I am about it, and then tell him; not but we have enough and to spare, yet master and mistress love to see plenty, and to welcome with no such peacods as words.

Walton. Go, thou hearty jade; trip it, and tell him.

Cotton. I will answer for it, thy friend is a good soul: I perceive it in the heartiness and alacrity of the wench. She glories in his hospitality, and it renders her labor a delight.

Walton. He wants nothing, yet he keeps the grammar-school, and is ready to receive, as private tutor, any young gentleman in preparation for Oxford or Cambridge; but only one. They live like princes, converse like friends, and part like lovers. *

Cotton. Here he comes: I never saw such a profusion of snow-white hair.

Walton. Let us go up and meet him.

Oldways. Welcome, my friends! will you walk back into the house, or sit awhile in the shade here?

Walton. We will sit down in the grass, on each side of your arm-chair, good master William. Why, how is this? here are tulips and other flowers by the thousand growing out of the turf. You are all of a piece, my sunny saint: you are always concealing the best things about you, except your counsel, your raisin-wine, and your money.

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* I pay this tribute to my worthy old tutor, Mr. Langley of Ashbourne, under whose tuition I passed a year between Rugby and Oxford. He would take only one private pupil, and never had but me. The kindness of him and his wife to me was parental. They died nearly together, about five-and-twenty years ago. Never was a youth blest with three such indulgent and affectionate private tutors as I was: before, by the elegant and generous Doctor John Sleath, at Rugby; and, after, by the saintly Benwell, at Oxford. — W. S. L.

Oldways. The garden was once divided by borders. A young gentleman, my private pupil, was fond of leaping: his heels ruined my choicest flowers, ten or twenty at a time. I remonstrated: he patted me on the shoulder, and said, "My dear Mr. Oldways, in these borders if you miss a flower you are uneasy; now, if the whole garden were in turf, you would be delighted to discover one. Turf it then, and leave the flowers to grow or not to grow, as may happen." I mentioned it to my wife: "Suppose we do," said she. It was done; and the boy's remark, I have found by experience, is true.

Walton. You have some very nice flies about the trees here, friend Oldways. Charles, do prythee lay thy hand upon that green one. He has it! he has it! bravely done, upon my life! I never saw any thing achieved so admirably — not a wing nor an antenna the worse for it. Put him into this box. Thou art caught, but shalt catch others: lie softly.

Cotton. The transport of Dad Walton will carry him off (I would lay a wager) from the object of his ride.

Oldways. What was that, sir?

Cotton. Old Donne, I suspect, is nothing to such a fly.

Walton. All things in their season.

Cotton. Come, I carried the rods in my hand all the way.

Oldways. I never could have believed, Master Izaak, that you would have trusted your tackle out of your own hand.

Walton. Without cogent reason, no, indeed: but — let me whisper.

I told youngster it was because I carried a hunting-whip, and could not hold that and rod too. But why did I carry it, bethink you?

Oldways. I cannot guess.

Walton. I must come behind your chair and whisper softlier. I have that in my pocket which might make the dogs inquisitive and troublesome, — a rare paste, of my own invention. When son Cotton sees me draw up gill after gill, and he can do nothing, he will respect me, — not that I have to complain of him as yet, — and he shall know the whole at supper, after the first day's sport.

Cotton. Have you asked?

Walton. Anon: have patience.

Cotton. Will no reminding do? Not a rod or line, or fly of any color, false or true, shall you have, Dad Izaak, before you have made to our kind host here your intended application.

Oldways. No ceremony with me, I desire. Speak, and have.

Walton. Oldways, I think you were curate to Master Donne?

Oldways. When I was first in holy orders, and he was ready for another world.

Walton. I have heard it reported that you have some of his earlier poetry.

Oldways. I have (I believe) a trifle or two; but, if he were living, he would not wish them to see the light.

Walton. Why not? — he had nothing to fear: his fame was established; and he was a discreet and holy man.

Oldways. He was almost in his boyhood when he wrote it, being but in his twenty-third year, and subject to fits of love.

Cotton. This passion, then, cannot have had for its object the daughter of Sir George More, whom he saw not until afterward.

Oldways. No, nor was that worthy lady called Margaret, as was this; who scattered so many pearls in his path, he was wont to say, that he trod uneasily on them, and could never skip them.

Walton. Let us look at them in his poetry.

Oldways. I know not whether he would consent thereto, were he living, the lines running so totally on the amorous.

Walton. Faith and troth! we mortals are odd fishes. We care not how many see us in choler, when we rave and bluster and make as much noise and bustle as we can; but if the kindest and most generous affection comes across us, we suppress every sign of it, and hide ourselves in nooks and coverts. Out with the drawer, my dear Oldways: we have seen Donne's sting; in justice to him, let us now have a sample of his honey.

Oldways. Strange that you never asked me before.

Walton. I am fain to write his life, now one can sit by Dove-side and hold the paper upon one's knee, without fear that some unlucky catchpole of a rheumatism tip one upon the shoulder. I have many things to say in Donne's favor: let me add to them, by your assistance, that he not only loved well and truly, as was proved in his marriage, — though like a good angler he changed his fly, and did not at all seasons cast his rod over the same water, — but that his heart opened early to the genial affections; that his satire was only the overflowing of his wit; that he made it administer to his duties; that he ordered it to officiate as he would his curate, and perform half the service of the church for him.

Cotton. Pray, who was the object of his affections?

Oldways. The damsel was Mistress Margaret Hayes.

Cotton. I am curious to know, if you will indulge my curiosity, what figure of a woman she might be.

Oldways. She was of lofty stature, red-haired (which some folks dislike), but with comely white eyebrows, a very slender transparent nose, and elegantly thin lips, covering with due astringency a treasure of pearls beyond price, which, as her lover would have it, she never ostentatiously displayed. Her chin was somewhat long, with what I should have simply called a sweet dimple in it, quite proportionate: but Donne said it was more than dimple; that it was peculiar; that her angelic face could not have existed without it, nor it without her angelic face, — that is, unless by a new dispensation. He was much taken thereby, and mused upon it deeply: calling it in moments of joyousness the cradle of all sweet fancies, and, in hours of suffering from her sedateness, the vale of death.

Walton. So ingenious are men when the spring torrent of passion shakes up and carries away their thoughts, covering (as it were) the green meadow of still homely life with pebbles and shingle, — some colorless and obtuse, some sharp and sparkling.

Cotton. I hope he was happy in her at last.

Oldways. Ha! ha! here we have 'em. Strong lines! Happy, no; he was not happy. He was forced to renounce her, by what he then called his evil destiny; and wishing, if not to forget her, yet to assuage his grief under the impediments to their union, he made a voyage to Spain and the Azores with the Earl of Essex. When this passion first blazed out he was in his twentieth year; for the physicians do tell us that where the genius is ardent the passions are precocious. The lady had profited by many more seasons than he had, and carried with her manifestly the fruits of circumspection. No benefice falling unto him, nor indeed there being fit preparation, she submitted to the will of Providence. Howbeit, he could not bring his mind to reason until ten years after, when he married the daughter of the worshipful Sir George More.

Cotton. I do not know whether the arduous step of matrimony, on which many a poor fellow has broken his shin, is a step geometrically calculated for bringing us to reason; but I have seen passion run up it in a minute, and down it in half a one.

Oldways. Young gentleman! my patron the doctor was none of the light-hearted and oblivious.

Cotton. Truly I should think it a hard matter to forget such a beauty as his muse and his chaplain have described; at least if one had ever stood upon the brink of matrimony with her. It is allowable, I hope, to be curious concerning the termination of so singular an attachment.

Oldways. She would listen to none other.

Cotton. Surely she must have had good ears to have heard one.

Oldways. No pretender had the hardihood to come forward too obtrusively. Donne had the misfortune, as he then thought it, to outlive her, after a courtship of about five years, which enabled him to contemplate her ripening beauties at leisure, and to bend over the opening flowers of her virtues and accomplishments. Alas! they were lost to the world (unless by example) in her forty-seventh spring.

Cotton. He might then leisurely bend over them, and quite as easily shake the seed out as smell them. Did she refuse him, then?

Oldways. He dared not ask her.

Cotton. Why, verily, I should have boggled at that said vale (I think) myself.

Oldways. Izaak! our young friend Master Cotton is not sedate enough yet, I suspect, for a right view and perception of poetry. I doubt whether these affecting verses on her loss will move him greatly; somewhat, yes: there is in the beginning so much simplicity, in the middle so much reflection, in the close so much grandeur and sublimity, no scholar can peruse them without strong emotion. Take, and read them.

Cotton. Come, come; do not keep them to yourself, dad! I have the heart of a man, and will bear the recitation as valiantly as may be.

Walton. I will read aloud the best stanza only. What strong language!

"Her one hair would hold a dragon,
Her one eye would burn an earth:
Fall, my tears! fill each your flagon!
Millions fall! A dearth! a dearth!"

Cotton. The doctor must have been desperate about the fair Margaret.

Walton. His verses are fine, indeed: one feels for him, poor man!

Cotton. And wishes him nearer to Stourbridge, or some other glass-furnace. He must have been at great charges.

Oldways. Lord help the youth! Tell him, Izaak, *that* is poetical, and means nothing.

Walton. He has an inkling of it, I misgive me.

Cotton. How could he write so smoothly in his affliction, when he exhibited nothing of the same knack afterward?

Walton. I don't know; unless it may be that men's verses, like their knees, stiffen by age.

Oldways. I do like vastly your glib verses; but you cannot be at once easy and majestical.

Walton. It is only our noble rivers that enjoy this privilege. The greatest conqueror in the world never had so many triumphal arches erected to him as our middlesized brooks have.

Oldways. Now, Master Izaak, by your leave, I do think you are wrong in calling them triumphal. The ancients would have it that arches over waters were signs of subjection.

Walton. The ancients may have what they will, excepting your good company for the evening, which (please God!) we shall keep to ourselves. They were mighty people for subjection and subjugation.

Oldways. Virgil says, "Pontem indignatus Araxes."

Walton. Araxes was testy enough under it, I dare to aver. But what have you to say about the matter, son Cotton?

Cotton. I dare not decide either against my father or mine host.

Oldways. So, we are yet no friends.

Cotton. Under favor, then, I would say that we but acknowledge the power of rivers and runlets in bridging them; for without so doing we could not pass. We are obliged to offer them a crown or diadem as the price of their acquiescence.

Oldways. Rather do I think that we are feudatory to them much in the same manner as the dukes of Normandy were to the kings of France; pulling them out of their beds, or making them lie narrowly and uneasily therein.

Walton. Is that between thy fingers, Will, another piece of honest old Donne's poetry?

Oldways. Yes; these and one other are the only pieces I have kept: for we often throw away or neglect, in the lifetime of our friends, those things which in some following age are searched after through all the libraries in the world. What I am about to read he composed in the meridian heat of youth and genius.

"She was so beautiful, had God but died
For her, and none beside,
Reeling with holy joy from east to west
Earth would have sunk down blest;
And, burning with bright zeal, the buoyant Sun
Cried through his worlds, '*Well done!*'"

He must have had an eye on the Psalmist; for I would not asseverate that he was inspired, Master Walton, in the theological sense of the word; but I do verily believe I discover here a thread of the mantle.

Cotton. And with enough of the nap on it to keep him hot as a muffin when one slips the butter in.

Oldways. True. Nobody would dare to speak thus but from authority. The Greeks and Romans, he remarked, had neat baskets, but scanty simples; and did not press them down so closely as they might have done, and were fonder of nosegays than of sweet-pots. He told me the rose of Paphos was of one species, the rose of Sharon of another. Whereat he burst forth to the purpose, —

"Rather give me the lasting rose of Sharon:
But dip it in the oil that oil'd thy beard, O Aaron!"

Nevertheless, I could perceive that he was of so equal a mind that he liked them equally in their due season. These majestical verses —

Cotton. I am anxious to hear the last of 'em.

Oldways. No wonder: and I will joyfully gratify so laudable a wish. He wrote this among the earliest: —

> "Juno was proud, Minerva stern,
> Venus would rather toy than learn:
> What fault is there in Margaret Hayes?
> Her high disdain and pointed stays."

I do not know whether, it being near our dinner-time, I ought to enter so deeply as I could into a criticism on it, which the doctor himself, in a single evening, taught me how to do. Charley is rather of the youngest; but I will be circumspect. That Juno was proud may be learned from Virgil. The following passages in him and other Latin poets —

Cotton. We will examine them all after dinner, my dear sir.

Oldways. The nights are not mighty long; but we shall find time, I trust.

> "Minerva stern."

Excuse me a moment: my Homer is in the study, and my memory is less exact than it was formerly.

Cotton. Oh, my good Mr. Oldways! do not let us lose a single moment of your precious company. Doctor Donne could require no support from these heathens, when he had the dean and chapter on his side.

Oldways. A few parallel passages. — One would wish to write as other people have written.

Cotton. We must sleep at Uttoxeter.

Oldways. I hope not.

Walton. We must, indeed; and, if we once get into your learning, we shall be carried down the stream without the power even of wishing to mount it.

Oldways. Well, I will draw in, then.

> "Venus would rather toy than learn."

Now, Master Izaak, does that evince a knowledge of the world, a knowledge of men and manners, or not? In our days we have nothing like it: exquisite wisdom! Reason and meditate as you ride along, and inform our young friend here how the beautiful trust in their beauty, and how little they learn from experience, and how they trifle and toy. Certainly the Venus here is Venus Urania; the doctor would dissertate upon none other; yet even she, being a Venus — the sex is the sex — ay, Isaak!

> "Her high disdain and pointed stays."

Volumes and volumes are under these words. Briefly, he could find no other faults in his beloved than the defences of her virgin chastity against his marital and portly ardor. What can be more delicately or more learnedly expressed!

Walton. This is the poetry to reason upon from morning to night.

Cotton. By my conscience is it! He wrongs it greatly who ventures to talk a word about it, unless after long reflection, or after the instruction of the profound author.

Oldways. Izaak, thou hast a son worthy of thee, or about to become so — the son here of thy adoption — how grave and thoughtful!

Walton. These verses are testimonials of a fine fancy in Donne; and I like the man the better who admits Love into his study late and early: for which two reasons I seized the lines at first with some avidity. On second thoughts, however, I doubt whether I shall insert them in my biography, or indeed hint at the origin of them. In the whole story of his marriage with the daughter of Sir George More there is something so sacredly romantic, so full of that which bursts from the tenderest heart and from the purest, that I would admit no other light or landscape to the portraiture. For if there is aught, precedent or subsequent, that offends our view of an admirable character, or intercepts or lessens it, we may surely cast it down and suppress it, and neither be called injudicious nor disingenuous. I think it no more requisite to note every fit of anger or of love, than to chronicle the returns of a hiccup, or the times a man rubs between his fingers a sprig of sweet-brier to extract its smell. Let the character be taken in the complex; and let the more obvious and best peculiarities be marked plainly and distinctly, or (if those predominate) the worst. These latter I leave to others, of whom the school is full, who like anatomy the better because the subject of their incisions was hanged. When I would sit upon a bank in my angling, I look for the even turf, and do not trust myself so willingly to a rotten stump or a sharp one. I am not among those who, speaking ill of the virtuous, say, "Truth obliges me to confess — the interests of learning and of society demand from me —" and such things; when this truth of theirs is the elder sister of malevolence, and teaches her half her tricks; and when the interests of learning and of society may be found in the printer's ledger, under the author's name, by the side of shillings and pennies.

Oldways. Friend Izaak, you are indeed exempt from all suspicion of malignity; and I never heard you intimate that you carry in your pocket the *letters-patent* of society for the management of her interests in this world below. Verily do I believe that both society and learning will pardon you, though you never talk of *pursuing*, or *exposing*, or *laying bare*, or *cutting up;* or employ any other term in their behalf drawn from the woods and forests, the chase and butchery. Donne fell into unhappiness by aiming at espousals with a person of higher condition than himself.

Walton. His affections happened to alight upon one who was; and in most cases I would recommend it rather than the contrary, for the advantage of the children in their manners and in their professions.

Light and worthless men, I have always observed, choose the society of those who are either much above or much below them; and, like dust and loose feathers, are rarely to be found in their places. Donne was none such: he loved his equals, and would find them where he could; when he could not find them, he could sit alone. This seems an easy matter; and yet, masters, there are more people who could run along a rope from yonder spire to this grass-plot, than can do it.

Oldways. Come, gentles: the girl raps at the garden-gate. I hear the ladle against the lock: dinner waits for us.

XVII. MACHIAVELLI AND MICHEL-ANGELO BUONARROTI.

Michel-Angelo. And how do you like my fortification, Messer Niccolo?

Machiavelli. It will easily be taken, Messer Michel-Angelo because there are other points — Bello-squardo, for instance, and the Poggio above Boboli — whence every street and edifice may be cannonaded.

Michel-Angelo. Surely you do not argue with your wonted precision, my good friend. Because the enemy may occupy those positions and cannonade the city, is that a reason why our fort of Samminiato should so easily be surrendered?

Machiavelli. There was indeed a time when such an argument would have been futile; but that time was when Florence was ruled by only her own citizens, and when the two factions that devoured her started up with equal alacrity from their prey, and fastened on the invader. But, it being known to Charles that we have neglected to lay in provisions more than sufficient for one year, he will allow our courageous citizens to pelt and scratch and bite his men occasionally for that short time; after which they must surrender. This policy will leave to him the houses and furniture in good condition, and whatsoever fines and taxes may be imposed will be paid the more easily; while the Florentines will be able to boast of their courage and perseverance, the French of their patience and clemency. It will be a good example for other people to follow, and many historians will praise both parties: all will praise one.

I have given my answer to your question; and I now approve and applaud the skill and solidity with which you construct the works, regretting only that we have neither time to erect the others that are necessary, nor to enroll the countrymen who are equally so for their defence. Charles is a prudent and a patient conqueror, and he knows the temper and the power of each adversary. He will not demolish nor greatly hurt the city. What he cannot effect by terror, he will effect by time, — that miner whom none can countermine. We have brave men among our citizens, — men sensible of shame and ignominy in enduring the dictation of a stranger, or the domination of an equal; but we have not many of these, nor have they any weight in our councils. The rest are far different, and altogether dissimilar to their ancestors. They, whatever was their faction, contended for liberty, for domestic ties, for personal honor, for public approbation; we, for pictures, for statues, bronze tripods, and tessellated tables: these, and the transient smiles of dukes and cardinals, are deemed of higher value than our heirloom, — worm-eaten, creaking, crazy freedom.

Michel-Angelo. I never thought them so; and yet somewhat of parental love may be supposed to influence me in favor of the fairer, solider, and sounder portion of the things you set before me.

Machiavelli. It is a misfortune to possess what can be retained by servility alone; and the more precious the possession, the greater is the misfortune.

Michel-Angelo. Dukes and cardinals, popes and emperors, cannot take away from me the mind and spirit that God has placed immeasurably high above them. If men are become so vile and heartless as to sit down quietly and see pincers and pulleys tear the sinews of their best benefactors, they are not worth the stones and sand we have been piling up for their protection.

Machiavelli. To rail is indecorous; to reason is idle and troublesome. When you seriously intend to lead people back again to their senses, do not call any man wiser or better than the rabble; for this affronts all, and the bad and strong the most. But tell them calmly that the chief difference between the government of a republic and a dukedom is this, — in a republic there are more deaths by day than by night; in a dukedom, the contrary: that perhaps we see as many taken to prison in a republic; certainly we see more come out.

Michel-Angelo. If any man of reflection needs to be shown the futility and mischief of hereditary power, we Florentines surely may show it to him in the freshest and most striking of examples. Lorenzo de Medici united a greater number of high and amiable qualities than any other man among his contemporaries; and yet Lorenzo lived in an age which must ever be reckoned most fertile in men of genius and energy. His heart was open to the poor and afflicted; his house, his library, his very baths and bed-rooms, to the philosopher and the poet. What days of my youth have I spent in his society! Even after he was at the head of the commonwealth, he had society; for even then he had fellow-citizens. What lessons has he himself given me in every thing relating to my studies! — in mythology, in architecture, in sculpture, in painting, in every branch and ramification of eloquence! Can I ever forget the hour when he led me by the arm, in the heat of the day, to the eastern door of our baptistery, and said, "Michel-Angelo, this is the only wonder of the world! It rose, like the world itself, out of nothing. Its great maker was without an archetype: he drew from the inherent beauty of his soul. Venerate here its image." It was then I said, "It is worthy to be the gate of Paradise:" and he replied, "The garden is walled up; let us open a space for the portal." He did it, as far as human ability could do it; and, if afterward he took a station which belonged not of right to him, he took it lest it should be occupied by worse and weaker men. His son succeeded to him: what a son! The father thought and told me that no materials were durable enough for my works. Perhaps he erred; but how did Piero correct the error? He employed me in making statues of snow in the gardens of Boboli; statues the emblems at once of his genius and his authority.

Machiavelli. How little foresight have the very wisest of those who invade the liberties of their country! — how little true love for their children! — how little foresight for their descendants, in whose interest they believe they labor! There neither is nor ought to be any safety for those who clap upon our shoulders their heavy pampered children, and make us carry them whether we will or not. Lorenzo was well versed in history: could he forget, or could he overlook, the dreadful punishments that are the certain inheritance of whoever reaps the harvest of such misdeeds? How many sanguinary deaths by the avenging arm of violated law! — how many assassinations from the people! — how many poisonings and stabbings from domestics, from guards, from kindred! — fratricides, parricides; and that horrible crime for which no language has formed a name, — the bloodshed of the son by the parental hand! A citizen may perhaps be happier, for the moment, by so bold and vast a seizure as a principality; but his successor, born to the possession of supremacy, can enjoy nothing of this satisfaction. For him there is neither the charm of novelty nor the excitement of action, nor is there the glory of achievement; no mazes of perplexing difficulty gone safely through, no summit of hope attained. But there is perpetually the same fear of losing the acquisition, the same suspicion of friends, the same certainty of enemies, the same number of virtues shut out, and of vices shut in, by his condition. This is the end obtained, which is usually thought better than the means. And what are the means, than which this end is better! They are such as, we might imagine, no man who had ever spent a happy hour with his equals would employ, even if his family were as sure of advantage by employing them as we have shown that it is sure of detriment. In order that a citizen may become a prince, the weaker are seduced, and the wiser are corrupted; for wisdom on this earth is earthly, and stands not above the elements of corruption. His successor, finding less tractability, works with harder and sharper instruments. The revels are over, the dream is broken; men rise, bestir themselves, and are tied down. Their confessors and wives console them, saying, "You would not have been tied down had you been quiet." The son is warned not to run into the error of his father, by this clear demonstration: "Yonder villa was his, with the farms about it; he sold it and them to pay the fine."

Michel-Angelo. And are these the doctrines our children must be taught? I will have none, then. I will avoid the marriage-bed as I would the bed of Procrustes. Oh that, by any exertion of my art, I could turn the eyes of my countrymen toward Greece! I wish to excel in painting or in sculpture, partly for my glory, partly for my sustenance, being poor; but greatly more to arouse in their breasts the recollection of what was higher. Then come the questions, Whence was it? — how was it? Surely, too surely, not by Austrians, French, and Spaniards, — all equally barbarous; though the Spaniards were in contiguity with the Moors, and one sword polished the other.

Machiavelli. The only choice left us was the choice of our enslaver: we have now lost even that. Our wealthier citizens make up their old shopkeeping silks into marquis-caps, and tranquilly fall asleep under so soft a coverture. Represent to them what their grandfathers were, and they shake the head with this furred foolery upon it, telling us it is time for the world to go to rest. They preach to us from their new cushions on the sorrowful state of effervescence in our former popular government, and the repose and security to be enjoyed under hereditary princes chosen from among themselves.

Michel-Angelo. Chosen by whom? and from what? — *ourselves?* Well might one of such creatures cry, as Atys did, if like Atys he could recover his senses under a worse and more shameful eviration, —

> Ego non quod habuerim;
> Ego Mænas; ego mei pars; ego vir sterilis ero.
> Jam, jam dolet quod egi!

Yes, indeed, there was all this effervescence. Men spoke loud; men would have their own, although they might have blows with it. And is it a matter of joyance to those wise and sober personages, that the government which reared and nurtured them to all their wisdom and sobriety, and much other more erect and substantial, should be now extinct? Rivers run on and pass away; pools and morasses are at rest for ever. But shall I build my house upon the pool or the morass because it lies so still? — or shall I abstain from my recreation by the river-side because the stream runs on? Whatever you have objected to republicanism may, in its substance a little modified, be objected to royalty, great and small, principalities, and dukedoms. In republics, high and tranquil minds are liable to neglect, and, what is worse, to molestation; but those who molest them are usually grave men or acute ones, and act openly, with fair formalities and professed respect. On the contrary, in such governments as ours was recently, a young commissary of police orders you to appear before him; asks you first whether you know why he called you; and then, turning over his papers at his leisure, puts to you as many other idle questions as come into his head; remands you; calls you back at the door; gives you a long admonition, partly by order (he tells you) of his superiors, partly his own; bids you to be more circumspect in future, and to await the further discretion of his

Excellency the President of the *Buon Governo.* O Messer Niccolo! surely the rack you suffered is more tolerable, not merely than the experience, but even than the possibility, of such arrogance and insult.

Machiavelli. Cæsar's head was placed on the neck of the world, and was large enough for it; but our necks, Messer Michel-Angelo, are grasped, wrung, and contracted for the heads of geese to surmount them. It was not the kick, it was the ass, that made the sick lion roar and die. Either the state of things which you have been describing is very near its termination, or people are growing low enough to accommodate themselves to their abject fortunes. Some fishes, once of the ocean, lost irretrievably, by following up a contracted and tortuous channel, their pristine form and nature, and became of a size and quality for dead or shallow waters, which narrow and weedy and slimy banks confine. There are stages in the manners of principalities, as there are in human life. Princes at first are kind and affable; their successors are condescending and reserved; the next, indifferent and distant; the last, repulsive, insolent, and ferocious, or, what is equally fatal to arbitrary power, voluptuous and slothful. The cruel have many sympathizers; the selfish, few. These wretches bear heavily on the lower classes, and usually fall as they are signing an edict of famine, or protecting a favorite who enforces it. By one or other of these diseases dies arbitrary power; and much and various purification is necessary to render the chamber where it has lain salubrious. Democracies may be longer-lived, although they have enemies in most of the rich, in more of the timorous, and nearly in all the wise. The former will pamper them to feed upon them; the latter will kiss them to betray them; the intermediate will slink off and wish them well. Those governments alone can be stable, or are worthy of being so, in which property and intellect keep the machine in right order and regular operation: each being conscious that it is the natural ally and reciprocal protector of the other; that nothing ought to be above them; and that what is below them ought to be as little below as possible; otherwise it never can consistently, steadily, and effectually support them. None of these considerations seem to have been ever entertained by men who, with more circumspection and prudence, might have effected the regeneration of Italy. The changes they wished to bring about were entirely for their own personal aggrandizement. Cæsar Borgia and Julius the Second would have expelled all strangers from interference in our concerns. But the former, although intelligent and acute, having a mind less capacious than his ambition; and the latter more ambition than any mind without more instruments could manage; and neither of them the wish or the thought of employing the only means suitable to the end, — their vast, loose projects crumbled under them.

Michel-Angelo. Your opinion of Borgia is somewhat high; and I fancied you did not despise Pope Julius.

Machiavelli. Some of you artists ought to regard him with gratitude; but you yourself must despise the frivolous dotard, who, while he should have been meditating and accomplishing the deliverance of Italy, — which *he* could have done, and *he* only, — was running after you, and breathing at one time caresses, at another time menaces, to bring you back into the Vatican, after your affront and flight. Instead of this grand work of liberation (at least from barbarians) what was he planning? His whole anxiety was about his mausoleum! Now, certainly, Messer Michel-Angelo, the more costly a man's monument is, the more manifest, if he himself orders the erection, must be his consciousness that there is much in him which he would wish to be covered over by it, and much which never was his, and which he is desirous of appropriating. But no monument is a bed capacious enough for his froward and restless imbecilities; and any that is magnificent only shows one the more of them.

Michel-Angelo. He who deserves a mausoleum is not desirous even of a grave-stone. He knows his mother earth; he frets for no fine cradle, but lies tranquilly and composed at her feet. The pen will rise above the pyramid; but those who would build the pyramid would depress the pen. Julius had as little love of true glory as of civil liberty, which never ruler more pertinaciously suppressed. His only passion, if we may call it one, was vanity. Cæsar Borgia had penetration and singleness of aim, — the great constituents of a great man. His birth, which raised him many favorers in his ascent to power, raised him more enemies in his highest elevation. He had a greater number of friends than he could create of fortunes ; and bees, when no hive is vacant, carry their honey elsewhere.

Machiavelli. Borgia was cruel, both by necessity and by nature : now, no cruel prince can be quite cruel enough ; when he is tired of striking, he falls. He who is desirous of becoming a prince should calculate first how many estates can be confiscated. Pompey learned and wrote fairly out this lesson of arithmetic ; but Julius Cæsar tore the copy-book from his hand and threw it among those behind him, who repeated it in his ear until he gave them the reward of their application.

Michel-Angelo. He alone was able and willing to reform the State. It is well for mankind that human institutions want revisal and repair. Our bodies and likewise our minds require both refreshment and motion ; and, unless we attend to the necessities of both, imbecility and dissolution soon ensue. It was as easy, in the Middle Ages, for the towns of Italy to form themselves into republics, which many did, as it was for the villages of Switzerland ; and not more difficult to retain their immunities. We are surely as populous, we are as well armed, we are as strong and active, we are as docile to discipline, we are as rich and flourishing : we want only their moral courage, their resolute perseverance, their public and private virtue, their self-respect and mutual confidence. These are indeed great and many wants, and have always been ill-supplied since the extinction of the Gracchi. The channel that has been dry so many centuries can only be replenished by a great convulsion. Even now, if ever we rise again to the dignity of men and citizens, it must be from under the shield and behind the broadsword of the Switzers.

Machiavelli. Thirty thousand of them, whenever France resumes her arms against the emperor, might be induced to establish our independence and secure their own, by engaging them to oblige the state of Lombardy first, and successively Rome and Naples, to contribute a subsidy, for a certain number of years, on the overthrow of their infirm and cumbrous governments. The beggars, the idle and indigent of those nations, might, beneficially to themselves, be made provisional serfs to our defenders, who on their part would have duties as imperative to perform. In the Neapolitan and papal territories, there is an immensity of land ill cultivated, or not cultivated at all, claimed and occupied as the property of the government, — enough for all the paupers of Italy to till, and all her defenders to possess. Men must use their hands rightly before they can rightly use their reason: those usually think well who work well. Beside, I would take especial care that they never were in want of religion to instruct and comfort them: they should enjoy a sprinkling of priests and friars, with breviaries and mattocks in the midst of them, and the laborer in good earnest should be worthy of his hire. The feudal system, which fools cry out against, was supremely wise. The truckle-bed of valor and freedom is not wadded with floss-silk: there are gnarls without and knots within; and hard is the bolster of these younger Dioscuri. Genoa, on receiving the dominion of Piedmont, would cede to Tuscany the little she possesses on the south of the Trebbia; Venice would retain what she holds; Bologna would be the capital of all the country to the eastward of the Apennines, from the Po to the Ofanto; Rome, from the sources of the Nar to the mouth of the Tiber (which still should be a Tuscan river, excepting what is within the walls), and southward as far as the Vulturnus; Naples would be mistress of the rest. These seven republics should send each five deputies yearly, for the first twenty days of March, enjoying the means of living splendidly in the apartments of the Vatican. For without a high degree of splendor no magistrate is at all respected in our country, and slightly anywhere else. The consul, invested with the executive power, should be elected out of the body of legates on the third day of each annual session; he should proceed daily to the hall of deliberation, at the Capitol, in state; the trumpet should sound as he mounts his carriage, drawn by eight horses, and again as he alights; no troops should accompany him, excepting twelve of the civic guard on each side, twelve before and twelve behind, on white chargers richly caparisoned, and appertaining to the consular establishment.

Michel-Angelo. I approve of this; and I should approve as heartily of any means whatsoever by which it might be effected. But it appears to me, Messer Niccolo, that the territories of Rome and Bologna, although the Bolognese would continue to the whole extent of the Apennines, would be less populous than the others.

Machiavelli. Where is the harm of that? A city may be angry and discontented if she cannot tear away somewhat from her neighbors. But, in the system I propose, all enjoy equal laws ; and, as it cannot be of the slightest advantage to any town or hamlet to form a portion of a larger State rather than of a smaller, so neither can the smaller State be liable to a disadvantage by any town or hamlet lying out of it. Rome has always been well contented to repose on her ancient glory. She loses nothing by the chain being snapped that held others to her ; for it requires no stretch of thought (if it did, I would not ask it of her) to recollect that it held *her* as well as *them*. Bologna's territory would begin with Ferrara on the north, and terminate with the Mediterranean on the south ; still, excepting the Roman, it would be the least. Her position will not allow her more, and well is it that it will not. For the priesthood has too long made its holes there, running underground from Rome ; and you know, Messer Michel-Angelo, the dairy will smell disagreeably where the rats have burrowed lately.

Michel-Angelo. True enough. Let me now make another remark. Apparently you would allow no greater number of legates from the larger States than from the smaller.

Machiavelli. A small community has need for even more to protect its interests than a larger. He who has a strong body has less occasion for a loud voice, and fewer occasions to cry for assistance. Five legates from each republic are sufficient in number, if they are sufficient in energy and information. If they are not, the fault lies with their constituents. The more debaters there are the less business will be done, and the fewer inquiries brought to an issue. In federal States, all having the same obligations and essentially the same form of government, hardly is it possible for any two to quarrel ; and the interest of the remainder would require, and compel if necessary, a prompt and a firm reconciliation. No State in Europe, desirous of maintaining a character for probity, will refuse to another the surrender of a criminal or debtor who has escaped to avoid that other's laws. If churches and palaces ought not to be sanctuaries for the protection of crime, surely whole kingdoms ought not. Our republics, by avoiding this iniquity, would obviate the most ordinary and most urgent cause of discord. Mortgaging no little of what is called the property of the church (subtracted partly by fraud from ignorance and credulity, and partly torn by violence from debility and dissension), I would raise the money requisite to obtain the co-operation of Switzerland and the alliance of Savoy; but taking care that our own forces much outnumber the allies, and, in case of war, keeping all the artillery in our hands.

Michel-Angelo. But what would you do with the pope?

Machiavelli. A very important consideration. I would establish him in Venice, where he would enjoy many advantages which Rome herself does not afford him. First, he would be successor to Saint Mark as well as to Saint Peter; secondly, he would enjoy the exercise of his highest authority more frequently, by crowning a prince every year in the person of the Doge (for that title, and every other borne by the chief magistrate of each city, should continue), and a princess in the person of the Adriatic, and, moreover, of solemnizing the ceremony of their nuptials; thirdly, and what is more glorious, he would be within call of the Bosniacs, who, hearing his paternal voice, would surely renounce their errors, abandon their vices, and come over and embrace the faith. The Bull of Indulgences might be a little modified in their favor. Germans had no objection to the bill of fare, but stamped and sweated to see the price of the dishes, which more elegant men in France and Italy, having tasted them all, thought reasonable enough. But in Bosnia they must be reduced a trifle lower; else they will be a stumbling-block to the neophyte, whose infirmer knees yet totter in mounting the *Santa Scala.*

Michel-Angelo. Do not joke so gravely, Messer Niccolo; for it vexes and saddens me.

Machiavelli. If you dislike my reasons, take some others very different. The nobility and people of Venice have less veneration for the Holy Father than have the rest of us Catholics, and longer opposed his authority. Beside, as they prefer Saint Mark to Saint Peter, there would always be a salutary irritation kept up in the body of Italy, and all the blood would not run into the head.

Michel-Angelo. Its coagulation there has paralyzed her.

Machiavelli. Furthermore, the Venetians would take measures that Saint Mark should have fair play, and that his part of the pugilistic ring should be as open and wide as the opposite. And now, in order to obtain your pardon for joking so infelicitously, let me acknowledge it among my many infirmities, that I cannot laugh heartily. I experience the same sad constriction as those who cannot bring out a sneeze, or any thing else that would fain have its way. You, however, have marvellously well performed the operation ; and now the ripples on lip and cheek, on beard and whisker, have subsided, let me tell you, Messer Michel-Angelo, we form our wisest thoughts and projects on the depth and density of men's ignorance ; our strength rises from the vast arena of their weaknesses. I know not when my scheme will be practicable ; but it has been, and it may be again.

Michel-Angelo. Finally, what is to become of Sicily, Sardinia, and Corsica ?

Machiavelli. I would place these islands at the emperor's disposal, to conciliate him.

Michel-Angelo. It would exasperate France.

Machiavelli. Let him look to that : it would be worth his while. Exasperated or not, France never can rest quiet. Her activity is only in her pugnacity : trade, commerce, agriculture, are equally neglected. * Indifferent to the harvests on the earth before her, she springs on the palm-tree for its scanty fruit.

Michel-Angelo. She would not be pleased at your allusion.

Machiavelli. I wish she would render it inapplicable. Italy, in despite of her, would become once more the richest and most powerful of nations, the least liable to attacks, and the least interested in disturbing her neighbors. Were she one great kingdom, as some men and all boys desire, she would be perpetually at variance with Hungary, Germany, France, and Spain. The confederacies and alliances of republics are always conducive to freedom, and never are hurtful to independence ; those of princes are usually injurious to the liberty of the subject, and often the origin of wars. Federal republics give sureties for the maintenance of peace, in their formation and their position: even those States with which any of them is confederated are as much interested in impeding it from conquests as from subjection. In kingdoms, the case is widely different. Many pestilences grow weaker by length of time and extent of action; but the pestilence of kingly power increases in virulence at every stride and seizure, and expires in the midst of its victims by the lethargy of repletion. At no period of my life have I neglected to warn my fellow-citizens of the fate impending over them. Only a few drops of the sultry and suffocating storm have yet fallen: we stop on the road, instead of pushing on; and, whenever we raise our heads, it will be in the midst of the inundation.

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* The population of France, at this time, amounted to scarcely fourteen millions ; Franche-comte, Lorraine, Alsace, and several cities on the borders of the Netherlands, not being yet annexed. Her incessant wars, of late generally disastrous, had depopulated her provinces, and there was less industry than in any other great nation round about her, not excepting the Spanish. Italy was supreme in civilization, commerce, and the fine arts, and was at least as populous as at present.

Michel-Angelo. I do believe that Lorenzo would have covered the shame of his parent State, rather than have wantoned with its inebriety.

Machiavelli. He might, by his example and authority, have corrected her abuses; and by his wealth, united to ours, have given work to the poor and idle in the construction of roads, and the excavation of canals through the Maremma.

Michel-Angelo. It was easier to kill Antæus than to lift him from the ground. Lorenzo was unable to raise or keep up Tuscany: he therefore sought the less glorious triumph of leading her captive, laden with all his jewels, and escorted by men of genius in the garb of sycophants and songsters.

Machiavelli. In fact, Messer Michel-Angelo, we had borne too long and too patiently the petulance and caprices of a brawling and impudent democracy. We received instructions from those to whom we should have given them, and we gave power to those from whom we should have received it. Republican as I have lived, and shall die, I would rather any other state of social life than naked and rude democracy: because I have always found it more jealous of merit, more suspicious of wisdom, more proud of riding on great minds, more pleased at raising up little ones above them, more fond of loud talking, more impatient of calm reasoning, more unsteady, more ungrateful, and more ferocious; above all, because it leads to despotism through fraudulence, intemperance, and corruption. Let democracy live among the mountains, and regulate her village, and enjoy her châlet; let her live peacefully and contentedly amid her flocks and herds; never lay her rough hand on the balustrade of the council-chamber; never raise her boisterous voice among the images of liberators and legislators, of philosophers and poets.

Michel-Angelo. In the course of human things, you cannot hinder her. All governments run ultimately into the great gulf of despotism, widen or contract them, straighten or divert them, as you will. From this gulf, the Providence that rules all nature liberates them. Again they return, to be again absorbed, at periods not foreseen or calculable. Every form of government is urged onward by another and a different one. The great receptacle in which so many have perished casts up the fragments, and indefatigable man refits them.

Machiavelli. Other forms may take the same direction as democracy, but along roads less miry, and infested with fewer thieves.

Michel-Angelo. Messer Niccolo, you have spoken like a secretary and a patrician; I am only a mere mason, as you see, and (by your appointment) an engineer. You indeed have great reason to condemn the levity, the stupidity, and the ingratitude of the people. But, if they prefer worse men to better, the fault carries the punishment with it, or draws it after; and the graver the fault the severer the punishment. Neither the populace nor the prince ever chooses the most worthy of all; who indeed, if there were any danger of their choosing him, would avoid the nomination? — for it is only in such days as these that men really great come spontaneously forward, and move with the multitude from the front; stilling the voice of the crier, and scattering the plumes of the impostor. In ordinary times, less men are quite sufficient, and are always ready. In a democracy, the bad may govern when better are less required; but, if they govern injudiciously, the illusion under which they were elected vanishes, the harm they do is brief, and attended by more peril to themselves than to their country. Totally the reverse with hereditary princes: being farther from the mass of the community, they know and care little about us; they do not want our votes; they would be angry if we talked of our esteem for them; and, if ever they treat us well, their security, not their sympathy, is the motive. I agree with you, Messer Niccolo, that never were there viler slaves than our populace, except our nobles, and those mongrels and curs intermediate who lean indolently on such sapless trunks, and deem it magnificent to stand one palm higher than the prostrate.

Machiavelli. A fine picture have you been drawing! — another *Last Judgment!*

Michel-Angelo. Your nobility, founded in great measure on yourself, is such that you would accept from me no apology for my remarks on that indiscriminately lavished by our enslavers among later families. None in Tuscany, few in Europe, can contend in dignity with yours, which has given to our republic thirteen chief magistrates. The descendants of a hunter from an Alpine keep in Switzerland can offer no pretence to any thing resembling it. Yet these are they who bind and bruise us! — these are they who impose on us as governors men whom we expunge as citizens.

Machiavelli. In erecting your fortification, you oppose but a temporary obstacle to the insult. My proposal, many years ago, was the institution of national guards; from which service no condition whatever, no age, from adolescence to decrepitude, should be exempt. But Italy must always be in danger of utter servitude, unless her free States, which are still rich and powerful, enter into a cordial and strict alliance against all arbitrary rule, instead of undermining or beating down each other's prosperity. While one great city holds another great city in subjection, — as Venice does with Padua and Verona, as Florence with Siena and Pisa, — the subdued will always rejoice in the calamities of the subduer, and empty her cup of bitterness into them when she can, although without the prospect or hope of recovering her independence. For there are more who are sensible to affronts than there are who are sensible to freedom; and vindictiveness, in many breasts the last cherished relic of justice, is in some the only sign of it.

Michel-Angelo. Small confederate republics are the most free, the most happy, the most productive of emulation, of learning, of genius, of glory, in every form and aspect. They also, for the reason you have given, are stronger and more durable than if united under one principality. This is proved, too, in the history of ancient Tuscany, which, under her Lucumons, resisted for many centuries the violent and vast irruptions of the Gauls, and the systematic encroachments of the wilier Romans. But the governors of no country possess so much wisdom as shall teach them to renounce a portion of immediate authority for the future benefit of those they govern, much less for any advantage to those who lie beyond their jurisdiction.

Machiavelli. Italy, and Europe in general, would avoid the most frequent and the worst calamities by manifold and just federation, to the exclusion of all princes, ecclesiastical and secular. Spain, in the multitude of her municipalities, is divided into republics, but jealous and incoherent. Wiser Germany possesses in many parts the same advantages, and uses them better; but the dragon's teeth, not sown by herself, shoot up between her cities. Switzerland rears among her snows little, fresh, and stout republics. Italy, in particular, is formed for them: many of her cities being free; all bearing within them the memory, most the desire, of freedom. No pontiff, no despot, can ever be friendly to science; least of all, to that best of sciences which teaches us that liberty and peace are the highest of human blessings. And I wonder that the ministers of religion (at least all of them who believe in it) do not strenuously insist on this truth, — essentially divine, since the founder of Christianity came on earth on purpose to establish peace; and peace cannot exist, and ought not, without liberty. But this blessing is neither the produce nor the necessity of one soil only. How different is the condition of the free cities in Germany from that of territories under the sceptre of princes! If seven or eight are thus flourishing, with such obstacles on every side, why might not the rest without any? What would they all be when hindrances were removed, when mutual intercourse, mutual instruction, mutual advantages of every kind, were unrestricted? Why should not all be as free and happy as the few? They will be, when learning has made way for wisdom; when those for whom others have thought begin to think for themselves. The intelligent and the courageous should form associations everywhere; and little trust should be reposed on the good-will of even good men accustomed to authority and dictation. I venerate the arts almost to the same degree as you do; for ignorance is nowhere an obstacle to veneration: but I venerate them because, above them, I see the light separating from the darkness.

Michel Angelo. The arts cannot long exist without the advent of freedom. From every new excavation whence a statue rises, there rises simultaneously a bright vision of the age that produced it; a strong desire to bring it back again; a throbbing love, an inflaming regret, a resolute despair, beautiful as Hope herself; and Hope comes, too, behind.

Men are not our fellow-creatures because hands and articulate voices belong to them in common with us: they are then, and then only, when they precede us, or accompany us, or follow us, contemplating one grand luminary, periodically obscured, but eternally existent in the highest heaven of the soul, without which all lesser lights would lose their brightness, their station, their existence.

If these things should ever come to pass, how bold shall be the step, how exalted the head, of genius! Clothed in glorified bodies of living marble, instructors shall rise out of the earth, deriders of barbarism, conquerors of time, heirs and coequals of eternity. Led on by these, again shall man mount the ladder that touches heaven; again shall he wrestle with the angels.

Machiavelli. You want examples of the arts in their perfection: few models are extant. Apollo, Venus, and three or four beside, are the only objects of your veneration; and, although I do not doubt of its sincerity, I much doubt of its enthusiasm, and the more the oftener I behold them. Perhaps the earth holds others in her bosom more beautiful than the *Mother of Love*, more elevated than the *God of Day*. Nothing is existing of Phidias, nothing of Praxiteles, nothing of Scopas. Their works, collected by Nero, and deposited by him in his Golden Palace, were broken by the populace, and their fragments cast into the Tiber.

Michel-Angelo. All? — surely not all!

Machiavelli. Every one, too certainly. For such was the wealth, such the liberality, of this prince, and so solicitous were all ranks, and especially the higher, to obtain his favor, I entertain no doubt that every work of these consummate masters was among the thousands in his vast apartments. Defaced and fragmentary as they are, they still exist under the waters of the Tiber.

Michel-Angelo. The nose is the part most liable to injury. I have restored it in many heads, always of marble. But it occurs to me (at this instant, for the first time) that wax would serve better, — both in leaving no perceptible line, and in similarity of color. The Tiber, I sadly fear, will not give up its dead until the last day; but do you think the luxurious cities of Sibaris and Croton hide no treasures of art under their ruins? And there are others in Southern Italy of Greek origin, and rich (no doubt) in similar divine creations. Sculpture awaits but the dawn of freedom to rise up before new worshippers in the fulness of her glory. Meanwhile I must work incessantly at our fortress here, to protect my poor clay models from the Germans.

Machiavelli. And from the Italians; although the least ferocious in either army would rather destroy a thousand men than the graven image of one.

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